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Canada

Bigger than a grizzly, smaller than the moon
timid as a mourning dove, more daring than a coon
silent as an iceberg, noisy as downtown
serious as a pastor, funnier than a clown
warmer than a beaver's fur, colder than a snake
harder than the Rockies, softer than Slave Lake
pesky as a grackle, haunting as a loon
Canada oh Canada, it's hard to sing your tune.

Bert Witvoet

Voice of the Martyrs celebrates 25 years of helping persecuted Christians

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — For the past 25 years, the Canadian branch of The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) has been helping out persecuted Christians in countries where freedom of religion is restricted. On June 8, members and supporters of VOM gathered at Ontario Bible College to reflect on the challenges the organization has faced in the past and faces today, and to consider a vision for its future.

VOM was started in the late 1960s by Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, a pastor from Romania who had been imprisoned and tortured under the former communist regime there. In 1966, he escaped to the U.S. where he started "Jesus to the Communist World," which would later become VOM. The name change happened about five years ago, after the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. Although VOM still works in communist countries, Nellie Brobbel (secretary/treasurer for VOM's Canadian office) explains that the name change also reflects VOM's work with Christians who are persecuted by Muslims and Hindus.

More work after communism

VOM's work has changed dramatically since the fall of communism in the Eastern Bloc, says Brobbel. "Before communism broke down in Eastern Europe, we could actually do very little," she says. "We only worked with the churches that were unregistered. When communism fell, then our work really took off." At that point, it became much easier to bring Bibles and other Christian materials there. "Our printing presses started printing around the clock," Brobbel adds.

Nellie and her husband, Klaas, started the Canadian office of VOM in 1971 and have worked with it since then. VOM now has offices in 25 countries and works in 20 more.

COURTESY VOM

Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, founders of VOM

One of the keynote speakers at the 25th anniversary conference was Dr. P.P. Job, director of VOM's office in India, where it is known as the Love In Action Society. Job spoke on effective ways of witnessing to Muslims and Hindus and later spoke about a vision for the future of VOM. During that speech, he challenged supporters to re-dedicate their lives to God.

As he began a workshop dealing with Muslims and Hindus, Job told those who were there, "you have prayed for me without seeing me. Because of your prayers, I am alive." Recently, Job was in the Sudan, where he was an eye-witness to the crucifixion of some Christians. He took a picture of this and was arrested but later escaped.

Job referred to communism, Hinduism and Islam as "three demonic powers" which Christians have to combat. "The fastest-growing religion in the

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News

Christians must combat 'three demonic powers'

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world is Islam," he said. "Islam has more missionaries than Christians have. They spend more money than all Christian missionaries spend."

Unlike Christians, Muslims believe they can earn their salvation through works, said Job. To get to heaven, Muslims must pray daily, fast, travel to Saudi Arabia to visit Mohammed's burial site and believe in Mohammed as the last prophet of God. Muslims also believe that if they kill non-Muslims they will go to heaven, Job added. "They believe if the enemy is killed, you are saved."

Jesus is contemporary

Muslims think of heaven as being a green paradise, in contrast to the Saudi Arabian desert where Islam was born. But Hinduism is "like a circle," said Job. Hindus believe "you start out as a drop of water from the ocean" and then are reincarnated many times. "If you want to be saved, you have to be reincarnated again and again."

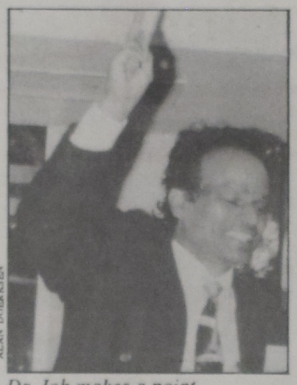
In contrast, Christians believe salvation comes through Jesus' atonement for sin, and the Christian idea of heaven is eternal presence with God, said Job.

The most effective message Christians can tell Muslims and Hindus is: "Jesus is contemporary," said Job. Although both Jesus and Mohammed were historical figures, only Jesus is contemporary.

"Personal evangelism is the best method of bringing these people to Christ," said Job. "You should be the fifth Gospel."

Preach 'two' instead of 'three'

"Never try to argue with a Muslim," he advised, adding, "They say our weakness is the



ALAN DOERKSEN

Dr. Job makes a point

Trinity.... When you preach the Gospel to a Muslim never mention the doctrine of the Trinity.... Don't bring confusion if you cannot bring a conclusion."

Job suggested a better message to bring to Hindus and Muslims: Jesus is attested to by two sets of witnesses — first the prophets and then the apostles; Jesus gave two promises: of forgiveness and the coming of the Holy Spirit; salvation comes with two conditions: repentance and belief; and Christianity is based on two historical events: Jesus' death and resurrection.

"The best missionaries today are from the Third World. They are trained in 'sufferology.'" Job commented. This is a contrast to America, which has produced the "prosperity gospel."

Personal risk

India, his home country, has 800 million Hindus and 130 million Muslims, said Job. Even though Muslims are a minority in India, there are almost as many there as in the three largest Muslim countries: Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Job expects a Hindu party to come to power in India soon, which would be a danger for Christians there.

Like other speakers at the conference, Job mentioned personal risk-taking he has made to bring the Gospel to Christians in restricted-access countries. Besides his recent experience in the Sudan, Job also helped bring 30,000 Bibles into Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War a few years ago.

Members and supporters of VOM travelled from as far away as Switzerland and Nicaragua to attend the 25th anniversary conference. Organizers hoped Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand could attend, but they were unable to because of bad health. Sabina, age 84, had cancer surgery last year and Richard, age 87, "is no longer able to walk very far," explained Nellie Brobbel. The Wurmbrands presently live near Los Angeles.

(See related story on page 3)

CLAC pulls out of Christian school in Brampton

Bert Witvoet

BRAMPTON, Ont. — After almost two years of trying to reach a collective agreement with the board of John Knox Christian School, the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) has given up. Although a majority of the teachers affiliated with the union voted at a recent meeting to remain with CLAC, the union felt it could not effectively act on the staff's behalf.

The staff at John Knox says in a statement to the school membership that it decided to switch to the Ontario Christian School Teachers Association (OCSTA) because "it became apparent to many on the staff that the community did not feel comfortable in having the CLAC act as their representatives."

CLAC agent Ed Bosveld says that the teachers' will to reach a first collective agreement was eroded by the board's lack of desire. He mentioned that, almost a year ago, a settlement was reached by the two committees representing the board and the staff respectively. "While the staff overwhelmingly ratified the settlement, the board rejected it, responding with a 15-page document asking for over 40 changes, large and small," says a CLAC news release.

Bosveld explains that this spring saw a similar retreat on

ST. PAUL'S

Ed Bosveld

the part of the board, after the staff committee "made a proposal which largely adopted the board's proposals on the outstanding issues."

Unlawful interference?

Bosveld also accuses the board of having violated the *Labour Relations Act 1995* by seeking to negotiate CLAC's relationship with its own members. While CLAC could have filed charges against the board, it decided not to do so, says Bosveld. "Both staff and CLAC were concerned about the damage that charges might do to the school community." According to Bosveld, the board took advantage of that concern, and "continued to flout the law, particularly by interfering in the staff's fundamental right to freedom of association" as principal and board encouraged the staff to consider being represented in contract talks by the Ontario Christian School Teachers Association, a professional organization, instead of by CLAC, a labor union.

Chair of the board Tom Riedstra denies this. He says that whatever was done happened at the invitation of the staff. Riedstra, who himself was a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers for more than 12 years and part of negotiation teams there, says that he knows better than to interfere with the teachers' wishes. He does acknowledge that he is pleased that the CLAC has withdrawn. He characterizes the last 18 months as "a rotten time," and says that the school can now get on with its business.

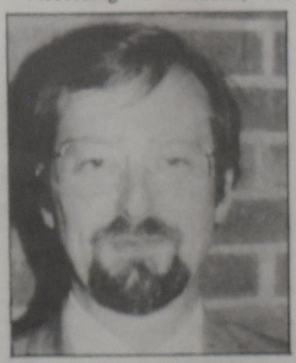
No mediation wanted

Both the school and the union have lost thousands of dollars in legal fees.

It didn't have to be that way, according to Bosveld. Suggestions to the board by the staff to ask an individual from the Christian community to act as mediator were refused. An offer by four local pastors to arbitrate the dispute was welcomed by CLAC and again refused by the board, says a CLAC news release.

Riedstra explains why. Our schools are run by parents, he says. The membership should have the final say over disputes. If teachers want a raise, and the board thinks it cannot afford that, the membership should have the final say. "That idea is foreign to unions," he says.

According to Riedstra, the



Adrian Guldemond

board wanted a free check-off system based on conscientious objection. All a teacher would have to do is say that he or she is opposed to joining the CLAC, and that teacher would not be required to pay union dues. CLAC, on the other hand, offers a limited form of check-off, where, if a written request based on conscientious objection is considered valid, the union will direct a teacher's union dues to a desired registered charity. This is CLAC's answer to compulsory check-off practised by secular unions.

One other major hurdle in the negotiations was the fact that, although the Brampton teachers were willing to eliminate their right to strike, the board did not want to eliminate their right to lock out teachers in the event of a labor dispute.

Labor laws not for schools

The Brampton board got a lot of guidance from the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools and from Dr. John Vriend, Redeemer College professor of education and a member of the negotiation team in the St. Catharines Christian schools.

OACS director, Adrian Guldemond, feels that a labor union in a private school is like a round peg in a square hole. As example he mentions that unions fall under labor legislation, which forbid any reference to a teacher's lifestyle in contracts. A lifestyle clause is essential to Christian schools, he says.

Bosveld calls that issue "a smoke screen." Having a lifestyle clause as part of the school's policy is "completely permissible," he says. It's only

See **CLAC** *page 5...*

Missionaries take risks to bring Gospel to Vietnam and China

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO — Sometimes taking personal risks is the only way to bring the Gospel to freedom-restricted countries, according to Tom White and Merv Knight of The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM).

Both White and Knight were keynote speakers at VOM's recent conference in Toronto, where they spoke about their own and others' experiences of sharing the Gospel in dangerous situations.

White has worked with the American office of VOM since 1971. For seven years in the late 1970s, he helped drop 400,000 pieces of Christian literature onto the island of Cuba. In May 1979, his plane crashed on a

ALAN DOERKSEN

Tom White

Cuban highway and he was captured by secret police. Following this, he spent three months in solitary confinement and 15 more months in other Cuban prisons before he was finally released.

More recently, White has been working to bring the Christian message to Vietnam. As American director of VOM, White usually makes two trips a year to Vietnam, along with a group of tourists.

Necessity breeds invention

Christians in Vietnam face serious opposition from three sources: communists, the police, and paganism. White refers to the police and paganism as "two tigers" that Vietnamese Christians are caught between.

Although Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) is relatively open to Christianity, other parts of the country are more restricted, says White. The Vietnamese government "refuses to allow indigenous tribes to be evangelized. " There are 62 tribes in Vietnam who don't speak Vietnamese, and the government forbids any Bibles in their languages.

VOM has been working to find creative ways and means to bring the Christian message to Vietnam. "We try every avenue," says White. Sometimes VOM workers will travel there as tourists or business people to help out local pastors. "The only way you can go as a missionary is with a humanitarian organization," White explains. "Probably Canadians can go in more easily than Americans."

Christians can also travel to Vietnam as professionals to do work such as teaching English. If people are planning to visit Vietnam, VOM can supply them with Bibles and other Christian materials to bring in with them, says White.

One way VOM is helping Vietnamese Christians this year is by taping some of their testimonies and broadcasting these to Vietnam from Hawaii, by shortwave radio. VOM workers also bring small shortwave radios into Vietnam.

Growth during persecution

VOM also helps Vietnamese pastors by providing them with motorcycles and gas. "They go out on evenings and weekends to tribal areas," White explains. Police cause much trouble for Vietnamese pastors who are often sent to prison or harassed by police. But, says White, "These pastors often find that their churches grow more while they're in prison." And some police have become Christians after interrogating believers.

Vietnamese Christians are using inventive ways to escape police persecution. White mentioned the example of one blind pastor who travels across the border to Cambodia at night to meet with Christians there. Police can't see him because he doesn't use a flashlight. Another example of secrecy is one house church that has a baptismal which is a hole in the ground hidden under a bed in someone's home.

White encourages supporters of VOM to send letters to encourage Vietnamese Christians. Donations to VOM also make a big difference to the work in Vietnam. "The dollar has incredible impact if you make $14 a month", which White says is the average wage in rural Vietnam.

God remained in China

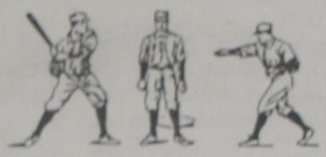
At the conference, Merv Knight spoke about how VOM has been working in China. Christianity has been restricted there since the Communists took power in 1949 and all Christian missionaries were expelled from China. In 1980, China "opened up for trade and tourism," and a group of VOM workers went into China to investigate the possibilities of working there. They discovered that "while the missionaries had all left China, God had stayed there," says Knight. A member of this initial group met a former Red Guard who held secret house church meetings in his store. He told the VOM workers, "I never knew there were Christians outside of China."

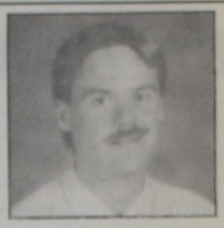
Knight also told the story of how he and other VOM workers had visited China in 1989 to see a secret press that was printing Bibles and other Christian materials. Once in China, they were given military uniforms to disguise themselves and were taken to a secret location in the countryside where Christians representing 100 house churches were meeting in a cave-like room. "Practically all these people had never seen a white person before," says Knight.

Later, he was taken to a room in a mountainside. A hole appeared in the floor and he was taken down a tunnel to a secret room where an old-fashioned press was printing "Tortured For Christ," a book which gives the testimony of Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, the founder of VOM. This printing press had been brought into the cave piece by piece and reassembled there, says Knight. A year later, a newer press was brought in. But eventually, the communist authorities discovered the press and destroyed it.

"You can't have a printing press and produce books without people finding out about it," says Knight. But he adds, "We can be thankful that tens of thousands of books were printed there." The people involved with the printing escaped unharmed. Despite this setback, Knight says, "we press on with confidence that it is God's work.... God can and will continue this work in China."

What's the score?





Rob Janssens

It isn't whether you win or lose, it's whether you watch the game

There's always been a group of people I've been unable to figure out. Why are they the way they are? What childhood trauma was inflicted on them which so radically affected their behavior such that it's a wonder they're able to survive in today's society. Why don't they get help? There must be a cure for their debilitating disorder!

No, I'm not referring to NDP supporters, the Flat Earth Society, or people who spit in public. The members of this society are in fact, the "Non Sports Fans." (NSFs.). While not pervasive in society, there does seem to be a lot of them out there. The NSFs are the ones who, almost as a perverse badge of honor, freely admit a total apathy and ignorance towards sports of all types, especially professional ones, looking at such pursuits as beneath them, as part of the Paleolithic Age.

Worse still, every once in a while, one of those NSFs comes out of his or her Ivory Tower, a land where "slapshot," "R.B.I.," and "Don Cherry" are forbidden to be used in day to day conversation, and spreads the NSF message in the media (usually newspaper opinion columns or radio phone-in shows). The NSF in question is usually one of two sub-groups within the species. Either the member has been one since birth, or has developed the disorder over time.

This second sub-group is the more dangerous, and his/her Ivory Tower is a little whiter and shinier. He reports on his former life as an out of control sports fanatic, and, like an ex-drug addict, wags a condescending finger of disapproval on the behavior of his past days, and clicks his tongue sadly at those who still cheer passionately for their favorite team, and stay up until 1 a.m. to watch triple overtime.

NSFs have a laundry list of spin-off behaviors which grew out of their fanaticism such as marital distress, exaggerated emotional swings, gambling on sports lotteries, spending hours reading sports magazines and the sports section of the newspaper. After listing them, the NSF then adds, "Don't let this happen to you!"

While I appreciate these wise words of warning, I respectfully dismiss them. If being a sports fan is affecting your marriage, finances, emotions and friendships, I submit that there were problems in those areas already, and that being a sports fan only gave them soil to grow in.

NSFs use extreme rhetoric such as "hypnotized," "immersed in vicarious thrills," and "isolated from reality"; and then feel free to brand all hard-core fans with these labels. Of course there are people out there who fit these descriptions. They're the ones who become serial killers, or need medical attention. But these behaviors cannot be attributed to them merely because they watch "Sportsdesk," get excited about the Super Bowl, or memorize the starting lineups of the 1988 World Series.

There are always going to be a small percentage of the population who become addicted to their favorite things. We all know people who maybe spend too much time watching "Star Trek" or soap operas; or doing gardening, cleaning, video games, or work. But how many would you call dangerously addicted?

Most people have a healthy balance of activities in their lifestyle. So, to all of you NSFs out there who yearn for a sports-free utopia, let up a little. You don't need to save us from ourselves. And next time you find yourself in trouble domestically, or financially, try to discover the real problem instead of naming sports as a scapegoat. By the way, did ya see the game last night?

Rob Janssens teaches Grade 6 at Trinity Christian School in Burlington, Ont., and recently coached the school baseball team to the District Championship.

Editorial

The clash between two parts of our kingdom vision

In a perfect world you would not need labor unions. But the world is not perfect. So unions (like hospitals, competition in business and police forces) are somewhat unwanted assets in a sinful and imperfect world. They become all the more assets if they are Christian in their approach, rejecting the adversary model and seeking to work co-operatively.

One might think, therefore, that a Christian union would be just the ticket for Christian schools, since Christian schools are not perfect places either. But it seems that imperfect Christian school boards do not want an imperfect Christian union to represent their imperfect teachers in negotiations. The reason? Not that CLAC is imperfect, and not at all that it is Christian, but precisely that it is a union.

This week's news report on how the Christian Labour Association of Canada has pulled out of Brampton's John Knox Christian School tells the story of irreconcilable differences, not first of all in the details of the negotiations, although that became the result, but in the unwillingness of the board to see CLAC as a useful agent in the Christian schools. Try what they might as they disarmed themselves by promising never to strike, the teachers at Brampton could not obtain a CLAC-brokered agreement with the board.

The outcome in Brampton is that the board and the Ontario Alliance for Christian Schools (OACS) are relieved and the CLAC is wounded. There's a certain amount of incredulity among CLAC ranks that two Christian bodies could not succeed where CLAC and a secular work place can and do succeed. According to CLAC representative Ed Bosveld, "It's a perfect fit. The Kingdom vision allows CLAC to provide Christian insight into labor relations and allows the school to provide Christian insight into education."

A disruptive third party?

From the beginning, the OACS, which advises its member school boards through policy manuals and other guidelines, has stated its opposition to having teachers represented by labor unions. Instead of seeing the union as a facilitator, they see it as a disruptive third party in the "trust" bond between parents and teachers. In reality, of course, there is no cozy two-some of parents and teachers anywhere, since the parents are represented by a board. Why could teachers not be equally represented by a union?

The reason for the opposition, says OACS director Adrian Guldemond, is that some things that are permissible under the education act are not permissible under the labor act. To prescribe a teacher's lifestyle is permissible under the education act but not under the labor act. Even though teachers in Brampton were willing to append that requirement to a labor contract, Guldemond does not think that settles the issue for boards. If it's not part of the contract, it has no legal standing, he feels. CLAC disputes that, saying that any board has the right to set school policies that can be enforced. There is some validity to Guldemond's concern since Bosveld admits that the reason CLAC did not want it as part of their contract is because contracts become public documents and other unions might "make hay of" a lifestyle clause. In other words, in labor circles a lifestyle clause is a no-no. But the CLAC is not an ordinary union.

A fair number of complexities

What can we learn from all this?

First of all, Christian schools are very fragile institutions that cannot easily absorb labor conflict. The fact that these schools are totally dependent for students and finances on a surrounding constituency that must be persuaded that the atmosphere at the school is harmonious, makes it difficult for any staff to press its demand in an organized way. It also means that members of the school association seldom get the full picture because of the school's PR concerns.

Secondly, it is not easy to dislodge a certain paternalistic, "we-know-what's-best-for-you" attitude among boards as they deal with their teachers. There is irony in this. Whenever boards want to promote their schools, they speak highly of the integrity, wisdom and dedication of their staff. But come contract time, these same boards can become quite distrusting of these highly motivated and mature teachers.

Thirdly, boards are responsible to the membership for providing good Christian education at an affordable cost. This makes it difficult for them to consider demands that they perceive to be in conflict with their primary mandate. Thus from a board point of view, any organized attempt to press demands of teachers puts them in a bind. Boards feel they can serve only one master.

Fourthly, boards tend to extend their claim to authority into contract talks, which is not right. Contracts are valid only if they take place between equals. In how many schools do meaningful negotiations take place?

Finally, just as CLAC may have a hard time doing justice to the educational demands of a school, so the teacher's professional associations cannot really do justice to the labor relations side of working in a Christian school. Not being under the aegis of the Labour Relations Act, these associations are not well able to protect their teachers from unfair labor practices unless they go to court. A union can circumvent such a time- and money-consuming process.

Let's salvage as much as we can

Given that the CLAC/Christian school experiment in Brampton has faltered, what can be redeemed from this attempt?

We believe that CLAC can be of invaluable assistance to the Christian teachers associations that represent almost all Christian teachers. By all accounts, these associations have been far too comfortable and passive when teachers ran into difficulties. Would it not be possible that some kind of affiliation be struck between CLAC and these teachers associations? At the very least, CLAC could be called upon to act in a mediating or consulting role.

It would be a shame if in our Christian communities we would be ruled by a fear of having our neat little world disturbed by reasonable labor practices and that one agency representing one part of our kingdom vision — CLAC — is set aside as good enough for unbelievers but not good enough for agencies representing another part of our kingdom vision — Christian schools. **BW**

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Letters

Psychologist, psychiatrist — there is a difference

I am writing with regards to your excellent article "Groups provide support around mental illness and disability."

Unfortunately an error crept into the article. Dr. John Toews, MD, from Calgary and author of *No Longer Alone: Mental Health and the Church*, is referred to as a featured *psychologist*. To the casual reader unfamiliar with the real difference between a psychologist and a psychiatrist this may not seem important. To families struggling with a long-term mental illness, it is.

Dr. John Toews is, as he himself likes to say, a psychiatrist who is a Christian. This is the reason that Christian Rainbows invited him all the way from Calgary, since we do not know of another psychiatrist closer by who is actively interested in treating people with serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bi-polar illness and clinical depression.

Bakers Encyclopedia of Psychology, edited by Prof. David Benner, makes the difference quite clear. I quote:

*"**PSYCHOLOGIST**: unlike the term physician or even psychiatrist, the word psychologist is laden with ambiguities. ...A physician is someone who holds an accredited medical degree and is legally sanctioned to practise medicine.... A psychiatrist is a physician who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of mental disorders. Few persons can tell you exactly what a psychologist is. Perhaps the best definition is: someone who is eligible for full membership in the American Psychological Association. To achieve such eligibility one must earn a doctorate that is primarily psychological in nature from an accredited educational institution etc."*

*"**PSYCHIATRIST**: A medical doctor who has received further specific training in the areas of mental health and disease. He [or she] studied human thought, feeling and behavior in the normal development and its aberrations. With training in both medicine and psychiatry, the psychiatrist stands ready to appreciate the emotional and physical connections within us in both health and disease."*

Gerry Denbok
Christian Rainbows of S.W. Ont.
Burlington, Ont.

Get the facts straight when you criticize

While I am surprised that the first Letter to the Editor regarding one of my articles is a support for the likes of Dennis Rodman and eccentricity in general, I do want to clear up some blatant factual errors in the letter of Dirk B. Schouten.

The easiest one is the obvious misspelling of Orel Hershiser, not once but three times. This was done in the context of reprimanding me for not doing better research into his career, which is kind of like asking Albert Einstein if he wouldn't mind checking the theory of relativity, just to make sure.

A quick read of Schouten's letter also raises another factual question. (Don't you just love it when people don't let the facts get in the way of a good complaint?)

Schouten criticizes Hershiser for demanding a "massive salary increase" after winning the World Series in 1988 with the Dodgers. Schouten, who also chides me for my "undeveloped" argument conveniently omits to mention that as part of the collective bargaining agreement between the players and owners at that time, Hershiser was entitled to salary arbitration, a process in which the player and team each offer a salary figure, one of which is selected by an independent arbitrator. This was his right according to baseball contracts at the time. It's a moot point anyway, because the Dodgers voluntarily gave Hershiser a 3-year, $7.9 million deal!

The wrong picture

Schouten also says Hershiser's ERA "skyrocketed" after that glorious 1988 season. Not so! It went from 2.26 in 1988 to 2.31 in 1989. *Does* Schouten really believe that a jump of 0.05 runs per game is a huge increase which should make Hershiser feel guilty and ashamed? I suggest he reconsider based on the facts, not his wild guess.

Schouten, pretending to be an insider, states that Hershiser was a "moody whiner who irritated his teammates," and someone who "will always be privileged." Schouten must have forgotten to mention that Hershiser underwent career-threatening shoulder reconstruction in 1990. This is hardly the road taken by the "forever privileged," and it was only through faith in God and dedication which has enabled him to, at the age of 37, continue to perform at a level of performance which would shame men much younger.

In closing, I am a little disappointed that Schouten would waste ink and paper defending Dennis Rodman. Remember, everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. I wonder who Schouten will leap to defend next: Marge Schott or Michael Irvin?

Rob Janssens
Burlington, Ont.

News

CLAC pulls out

... continued from page 2

for political reasons that CLAC does not want that as part of a contract. Other unions, who are always scrutinizing what CLAC is doing, might criticize the CLAC for including that in a contract, which becomes a public document.

Guldemond points to labor formulas, like seniority rights, as taking away a board's flexibility to deal with staffing problems. "In education not a single teaching program is identical," he says.

Guldemond is sympathetic to staffs that feel intimidated by boards, but he would prefer to see that matter addressed by encouraging the Ontario Christian School Teachers (OCSTA) to get involved. OCSTA does not fall under labor legislation.

In the meantime, the CLAC is still trying to work out an agreement between the teachers of the Association for Christian Education in St. Catharines and its board.

Praise for CLAC

Despite the many divisions, Bosveld says that many positive things were accomplished in the bargaining process: "wages, benefits, a Staff-Board relations Committee, extra maternity leave provisions, professional upgrading, workload issues, a binding grievance procedure with arbitration — all these things were agreed upon and more."

The staff of John Knox Christian School echoes that sentiment, when they acknowledged in their statement to the membership that "the CLAC was very helpful in formulating a contract that had many excellent qualities. We deeply appreciate and are thankful to the CLAC for their insight, their time and their willingness to articulate educational/employment issues. JKCS-Brampton, as well as Christian schools across the province, have benefited from CLAC's ability to create clearly defined procedures and policies."

Riedstra, too, admits that "a tremendous amount of good has come from CLAC's involvement. It woke up OACS and OCSTA and benefited many, many schools," he says. "I would love to applaud CLAC for that."

According to Riedstra, there is no doubt that new contract model set up by OACS and OCSTA called PERM was influenced by what CLAC did. Riedstra added that he would not mind if OCSTA became a union, as long as it did not put itself under labor legislation.

CLAC remains committed to help improve working relations in Christian schools, says Bosveld, who's convinced more than ever that CLAC is necessary. "Labor relations in Christian schools have a long way to go," he adds. "But teachers and the community will also have to be willing to hold their school boards to lawful and ethical behavior."

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Christians in Careers

Nandy Heule

On the job with Constable Kelly Kippen

In Ontario, some police officers are now being trained to use a powerful pistol because this type of weapon is smuggled into Canada from America. Even experienced police officers train around 30 hours to learn how to use these weapons. If you're looking for an argument in favor of gun control, imagine an untrained teenager using this type of firearm at his discretion....

Name: *Kelly Kippen*
Age: *Thirty-something*
Employer: *Peel Regional Police*
Job: *Constable (defensive tactics and firearms use-of-force instructor)*
Location: *Brampton, Ont.*

We all make mistakes, but when Constable Kelly Kippen is on the job even a minor error can be deadly.

"It's so dangerous, I have to be alert 100 per cent of the time," says Kippen, age 38. He is the father of three young children, and a member of Second Christian Reformed Church in Brampton, Ont.

A 16-year-old veteran of the Peel Regional Police force, Kippen is one of eight officers who train their colleagues in defensive techniques and the use of a variety of firearms including shotguns and pistols.

The trainees use live ammunition at all times, and it's statistically inevitable that someone, sometime will get hurt, says Kippen, who wears a blue bullet-proof vest during all firearm exercises. We have to disprove the statistics, he says, adding that nobody has been hurt yet. Of course, there's only one reason for any firearm, and that's to kill, says Kippen. It's part of his job to encourage a "healthy respect" for guns.

It's important to treat everybody equally and fairly, and to know that these weapons are a last resort, says Kippen.

Fighting evil in the street

"People in church think it must be very hard to do my job because it says 'Thou shall not kill' while I specialize in shooting.

"But, I think, we're fighting evil in the street just like a pastor might be fighting evil from the pulpit," says Kelly about integrating his faith and work life.

Ironically, Kelly now works straight days, while his previous assignments required him to work shifts. "It makes it easier to have a stable church life when working regular hours," says Kippen.

Kippen holds a second-degree black belt in Tae Kwan Do. He might be working regular hours now, but his job is far from ordinary.

While training officers in defensive combat techniques, he changes from a bullet-proof vest into a black, thick foam-type protective suit with full headgear, but still gets "really hurt" at times. (Another instructor recently broke a thumb when an enthusiastic trainee threw her to the ground during routine training.)

Many of the training sessions take place in the basement of the police headquarters kitty-corner from a Catholic church and across the road from the typical suburban assortment of big-name franchise outlets, a gas station and a court house.

Kippen says he will be busy for the next three years or so to train Peel officers in the use of pistols, a more advanced weapon than the revolver police deemed adequate in the past. Police are being "outgunned" by the "guys on the street" who obtain pistols that have been smuggled into the country, says Kippen. A pistol can fire off 12 rounds of ammunition and be reloaded much faster than the revolver, which only holds six bullets. The difference between shooting a pistol or a revolver compares to swinging a baseball bat or a tennis racket, says Kippen. Experienced officers train 30 hours and complete 1,000 rounds before being qualified to carry a pistol.

"I've always been able to bring officers around even if they come into training with a "horrendous shot," says Kelly, who feels blessed with a patient attitude. "It's a lot of fun and I enjoy the interaction with different people every day."

Before obtaining the training position, Kippen also worked as a safety officer in schools and for six years as an officer in the tactical unit and bomb squad.

The Peel force currently employs about 1,100 armed officers who patrol a population of around 600,000 in Mississauga and Brampton, as well as all the travellers going through Pearson International Airport.

Nandy Heule is a writer and publisher in Brampton, Ont., who tries to build bridges between generations through the publication of life stories.

COURTESY PEEL POLICE

Kelly Kippen in uniform

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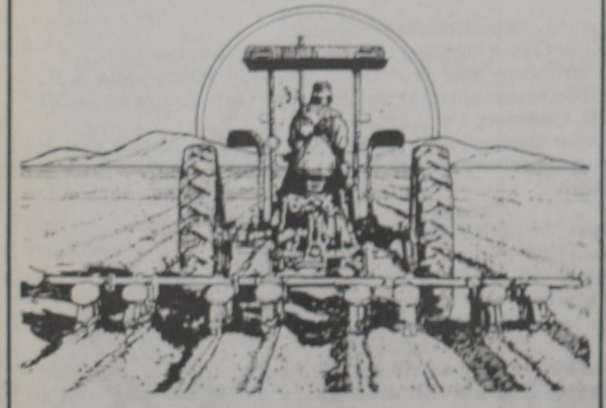

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ARTS & MEDIA

Darrin Berg and band: By Grace Alone

By Grace Alone a good debut for Darrin Berg

Marian Van Til

Engineered and mixed at Studio A-Mirador, Kitchener, Ont., by Ron Burken. Darrin Berg, vocals, harmonica, guitar, piano; Mark Williamson, lead guitar, rhythm guitar; Maxine Nangle, bass guitar; Franz Nangle, drums; Sonshine City: vocal on "Peace."

This is a good first effort by a young Christian Reformed singer/songwriter who's hoping to break into the Christian Contemporary Music (CCM) scene which is centred in Nashville and Los Angeles. It's a tough market which requires a lot of originality and probably even more marketing skills.

Darrin Berg says he wants to develop an original sound by veering in the direction of southern gospel rather than mainstream CCM. There's evidence of that on the spirited first track "Peace," with its four-part harmony refrain. (This is an exuberant, joyous peace, not a contemplative one.)

From there on, the southern gospel influence isn't obvious. The second track, "Someday," effectively contrasts quiet stanzas introduced by soft but insistent strumming ("Like a thief in the night He will come...") with an electrified, driving, hard rock-style refrain: "Someday He's comin' back to take me home. Someday I'm never gonna be alone."

"For the Love of God" ("For the love of God we live, for the love of God we die...") is a call to full-time faith, which includes feeding the hungry, helping the oppressed and taking risks for Christ. It offers a change of basic beat and a slightly more bluesy style.

One-on-one with Jesus

Berg has a pleasant, clear, tenor-range voice which he usually uses to good advantage. However, there are a few tracks on which he strains on the high notes. That is first evident on "For the Love of God," giving the impression that the song should have been pitched lower. There's a bit of the same problem on the next, otherwise effective, ballad, "Take me" (accompanied only by electric piano); and on the next track as well: "[Let the Whole World Know] Jesus Lives."

Many of the songs speak of one-on-one confrontations with Jesus. A couple allude to living our faith by showing the love and compassion of a true neighbor, in Jesus' sense of the word. A particularly effective number, "Soapbox Preacher," alludes to Christ in our century, and us, his followers. Week after week the outdoor urban preacher confronts a mostly indifferent, sometimes hostile, crowd. But when he is dragged away and arrested, and soon after dies, the gospel still rings out: "The soapbox congregation still gathers Friday nights/it's just as if that pamphlet preacher never even died."

"Soapbox Preacher" is effective both lyrically and musically, done in a kind of funky bluegrass style.

On "All I Need [is Jesus]" there's some competent and interesting acoustic guitar work, and later electric guitar adds a kind of counterpoint.

Electric piano and acoustic guitar (and later drums) are combined as the accompaniment to the meandering, ballad-like verses of "Jehovah." The refrain comes up a notch in intensity, proclaiming: "Jehovah, great and mighty Lord/Jehovah, master of the world/Jehovah, I bow before your throne; Jehovah, make my heart your home."

Though Berg says his style is influenced by gospel and blues, most of this 32-minute album owes more to classic rock. On the whole, the harmonies could be more interesting and lyrics and tunes more varied. But Berg is off to a good start. If he continues to develop an individual style and learns to write about more subjects from the range and depth of his own experience, you'll probably be hearing from him again.

Young CRC songwriter turns hopes to Nashville

Marian Van Til

ST. CATHARINES, Ont. — Darrin Berg is an affable guy whose smile lights up his face easily and often. He doesn't seem like the kind of guy who lets things get him down. But then, by his own admission, Berg is on the verge of an exciting adventure.

What he enjoys more than virtually anything else is writing songs that express his faith, and then singing and playing those songs with a little help from his friends. At age 23 Berg has just recorded his first compact disc — the first of many, he hopes.

In the last year he also graduated from Dordt College and married teacher Shelley Hoekstra. And at the end of this summer, it's on to Nashville for a couple of months.

The Nashville opportunity came about through a friend of Berg's, Mark Woodly, a professional musician who was under contract with Word Records for 10 years. Woodly turned from performing to pastoring, and then to record producing. Woodly's company, Ten X Corporation (an allusion to the parable of the talents), has offices both in Hamilton, Ont., and Nashville. "He knows all kinds of people," says Berg, "including Amy Grant and [members of the group] DC Talk."

Darrin Berg

Though Berg's current recording was not produced by Ten X, Woodly "is now signing artists," says Berg, and has offered him an opportunity to go to Nashville to "network" with people in the Christian contemporary music industry and to record an album for Ten X. "Mark has all kinds of advice about 'how to get out there,'" that is, how to get your name and your music known in the industry. "He's also got constructive criticism for me" — something Berg admits he needs.

High sights

Berg has been singing since childhood and began writing songs five years ago. He favors a popular musical style which is reminiscent of southern gospel and slightly blues influenced. Larry Norman is his favorite Christian singer/songwriter; and he, like many others, is impressed with the guitar playing of Phil Keaggy.

Berg regularly sings for youth groups and in Toronto-area worship services in Christian Reformed churches. He also does concerts and last year presented a successful fundraiser for the Christian school in Brantford, Ont., where he grew up. Though he taught himself to play guitar and piano, he often uses a back-up band consisting of "guys I knew and played with in high school." Sometimes his friend Durk Botma from Sarnia joins; or professional players are hired.

Berg's CD is called *By Grace Alone*. That's entirely apt, he says. "After a lot of prayer we went to the studio [to do the recording]" and God worked things out. He knew, and others had reiterated that "if you're gonna do this, you have to step in faith."

While several people had offered some financial help if he ever wanted to make a recording, he needed a great deal more money. So he took the bold step of sending order forms to churches at which he had played, asking pre-payment of anyone interested in having a CD. He got 100 responses at $14 each. But he was still $2000 short. After more prayer, "Mark stepped in," says Berg. "He said, 'Here's a cheque for $2000. Go glorify God!'"

So the recording got made.

Though Berg enjoys singing, he admits he likes writing songs better. He has his sight set on someday getting a Juno — or a Grammy or a Dove award. He dreams that "ideally I'd like to write, and release an album every couple of years. At the foundation of it all, I want to get new, fresh music into the Christian arena in Canada that honors and glorifies God."

Opinion

How much faith do we have in God's covenant?

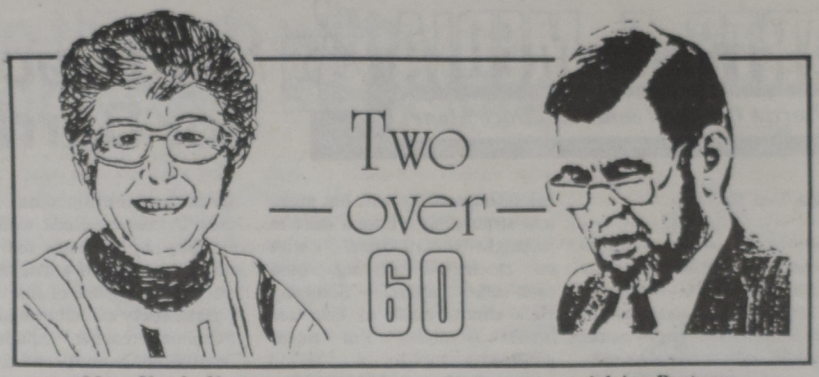
Although the column "Two Guys over 60" is less than a year old and was well received from what we gathered, we have nevertheless decided to make some important changes. I have decided to pull out in favor of Mary VanderVennen. My voice is already heard in my editorials every week, and having me give my opinions in a column once a month in addition is a little too much of one person's viewpoint.

Having Mary VanderVennen take my place has several advantages: Mary's voice is relatively new to our readers; she and Adrian Peetoom have different backgrounds (Mary is a third-generation Dutch-American; Adrian, like myself, is a first-generation Dutch-Canadian); Mary will give a woman's perspective.

Mary is a retired psychotherapist and director of professional services for Christian Counselling Services in Toronto. We are happy that she has agreed to be Adrian's writing partner in a column that will now be known simply as "Two Over 60."

We've made another important addition as well. Two young Reformed thinkers under 30 will soon be writing a monthly column also. The two are Irene Bom, former CC reporter and now a doctoral student in literature at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., and Dennis Van Staalduinen, a former member of CC's editorial committee who works for a computer company in Ottawa. The two columns "Two Over 60" and "Two Under 30" will alternate on a bi-weekly basis.

We sincerely hope that the community will take a renewed interest in CC's attempt to be a clear guiding voice for younger and older adults of the Christian community as we near the end of the 20th century. *The Editor*



Mary VanderVennen Adrian Peetoom

Dear Adrian

Well, here we are, two folks over 60, beginning a public correspondence. I'm looking forward to it, partly because you and I in some ways are very different and partly because I know we share a solid core of beliefs and values, which includes a love for fine sherry.

I'd like to start us off with a salute to the next generation.

One of the things we over-60s tend to do is bemoan the future of the world and the church based on what we see of the rising generation. I guess it's always been that way. I remember my parents predicting and expecting the worst when Bob and I moved to Jackson, Mississippi, where Bob was going to teach in a Presbyterian college, of all things. That was too far out of the Christian Reformed womb for them.

I find that amazing from people who have such a strong view of the covenant as we profess and as my parents had. We seem to have precious little comforting faith in it. Perhaps that's because at some conscious or unconscious level we want our children's lives pretty much to mirror ours, at least in some basic as well as lifestyle ways. Wouldn't that be comfortable? And wouldn't that prove that we as parents had done a pretty good job? And wouldn't that prove that God is faithful? How else would we know?

I think the pattern of children repeating their parents' life is pretty much over, if it ever existed to the degree that we think it did. After all, most of the readers of this newspaper — many of them over 60 — made a radical break in lifestyle when they immigrated to Canada or the States.

Or did they? Were too many of them content with re-establishing the old ways in a new country, along with considerably raising their standard of living? But maybe that's another letter.

Anyway, if we are looking for sameness, we are doomed to disappointment. And maybe we should thank God for that! I look at the rising generation — my children, your children and their peers — and I see all kinds of signs of hope. I find that many fathers are more active in bringing up their children than the fathers of my and previous generations were. I find young couples asking basic questions about marriage and parenting. I find young families with great sensitivity to issues of caring for the creation as well as for other people. I find single people living their lives with integrity. I see our para-church organizations in good hands: CPJ, CLAC, ICS, CRWRC — the whole Christian Reformed alphabet. I see the next generation encountering their society in a more comprehensive way than ours did, for the most part. And many of them are truly trying to bring their faith into the daily workings of their lives. I see churches trying to relate to neighborhood people who are different from ourselves.

Are there exceptions to what I'm seeing? Of course. Do you or I personally like all the new questions or approaches? Probably not. Do we wish there were more interest in the basic questions of the faith? Probably. But wouldn't it be great if we as the older generation could find it in our hearts and mouths to praise God for the rising generation and to bless them in their efforts to maintain a distinctive Christian witness? And wouldn't that revitalize our and their faith in the covenant? And incidentally, wouldn't that make for a great Mother's or Father's Day service?

Cheers to the covenant,
Mary

Dear Mary,

As I read and reread you letter, I felt a twinge of guilt. I'm one of those who have at times bemoaned the future of world and church based on what I've seen of the rising generation. In particular, I've made mention of Bible illiteracy and lack of interest in traditions. Thank you for the corrective. I observe every one of your positives in my children and their friends. Even those who do not attend church anymore have a far stronger sense of introspection than I ever had at their age, and the parenting done by my son and sons-in-law far surpasses my own.

You ask a good question. With our strong view of covenant, why can't we possess and exhibit more trust that God will guide the next generations as he has guided us? Why is it that we fear that the Way will be lost unless our children follow *our* ways? In my view, you've already hinted at two major reasons. One is that believers often mouth confessions they do not really own, especially in our tradition with its strong emphasis on verbal statements (creeds, single Bible "proof" texts). Our lives are often not in harmony with our church words.

The other reason you raise in the form of your own question. Did the first generation of Dutch immigrants (say, 1948-54) come looking for a new way of life? There are good reasons to doubt that. Ethnic historians have consistently argued that certain types of immigration are *conservative* movements, not radical ones. The coin that "financed" the trek across the Atlantic for many early Dutch immigrants had two sides:

* the cause of God's Kingdom was lost in Holland (Europe);
* Canada was virgin land ripe for a new expression of that Kingdom.

The forerunners and early editions of *Calvinist Contact* are full of evidence of this coin, as are a number of books written about this time. There's plenty of other evidence to suggest that the early immigrants wanted to establish in Canada the same kind of Calvinist sub-culture they knew to be fatally threatened in the old country. (The current CRC alphabet — CPJ, CLAC, OACS and ICS — are its remnants.) They came not to encounter and develop the new, but to re-establish the old.

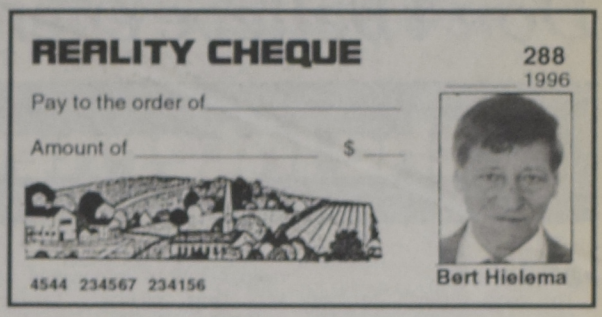
I detect in my own soul the remnants of this "coin," even though I realize its ultimate foolishness. (I know that the Dutch Reformed lifestyle of the 1920-40s had many dark sides.) Some of my peers and I adopted a damaging triumphalism in the building days of the 1950s and 60s. And yet, I can still get quite nostalgic when I read the stories of a pre-W.W.II Reformed life in Dutch rural areas. How predictable, stable, triumphant, heady and "inspired" it all seemed. Oh those meetings, those rallies, the songs, the organs, the sermons, the discussions, the opinions, the leaders. There's a side of me still that misses it all and regrets its passing.

There's plenty of other evidence to suggest that the early immigrants wanted to establish in Canada the same kind of Calvinist sub-culture they knew to be fatally threatened in the old country

And I get critical of my children and their peers when I detect that they have no interest in these stories of my life. Worse, they have no understanding of them. It's as if I speak a foreign language when I describe my "young people" time. My Reformed nurture aimed my life at clear goals: become an adult participant in known and tested structures. My children and their peers have no such structures into which to fit. Many do not send their children to Christian schools, and they have a weak commitment to Reformed forms of worship. Part of me understands and respects that, and part of me regrets it. It's the latter part that gets me critical of them at times.

Betwixt and between,
Adrian

Some deficits aren't financial



Bert Hielema

A few weeks ago the force of the new economy came home to Tweed. In our area we basically have three employers: the public school — its teachers, bus drivers, and maintenance personnel; Ontario Hydro; and the largest employer in the area, the Ministry of Natural Resources. Natural Resources has had a presence in Tweed since 1930 and employs some 50 people, accounting for about half of the middle class jobs in our village.

Abruptly, without consultation, the office was closed. The consequences have been disastrous for the affected personnel, the local economy (already suffering from a nearby Wal-Mart), and for the municipality, which owns the MNR building and will lose a $230,000 annual income, or about 25 per cent of its total revenue. Ironically, the building had just been totally renovated, with the village still paying off the bank loan.

Once the news had become known, a meeting was called at which the area progressive Conservative MPP was present. It is telling that he had been kept in the dark about the situation. But at the meeting, any of the 20 or so people who spoke — there were at least 300 present, with loudspeakers hooked up for those outside — was more articulate and compassionate than our political representative in Toronto. He, drawn from the backwoods to the backbenches, changed for me his MPP to mean Most Pointless Prattler.

A few days later I was present at another political gathering just north of us at which the MNR minister himself was present. He appeared on the podium flanked by Van Koughnet, the riding member there, who later that same week was apprehended in a police sting for allegedly soliciting sex from a policewoman posing as a prostitute. When I now think of Van Koughnet as an MPP I can't help but think of him preferring his Member's Perverse Pleasure. I have been told that he is famous for holding the record of least words spoken in the Commons — and he's been there for 14 years.

The minister (servant) in charge of the Natural Resources in Ontario, when questioned why Tweed had to be closed, muttered only that it would mean a $5 million dollar saving. Asked why Tweed, which is strategically located 100 km from Peterborough to the west, Kingston to the east and Bancroft to the north, would be closed, while two offices in his riding, Minden and Haliburton only 25 km apart, would stay open, he walked away.

What worries me in particular is the belief among some Christians that the poor are poor because of their own mismanagement or their own stupidity, and that a bit of belt tightening will do them good.

'Madmen' in charge

All this reminded me of Lord Keynes, the great English economist who said: *Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually slaves to some defunct economist. Madmen in authority (this was before* madwoman *Margaret Thatcher) who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler a few years back.*

Madmen or madwomen in power. Margaret Thatcher, in her frenzy to cut the deficit, fired the meat inspectors; 15 years later we have mad cow disease. Her immediate savings were perhaps $10 million. The cost now is a conservative $5 billion to the British economy.

In Ontario we now have madmen in authority. Take the main plank of the present Ontario government, the taxcut. The government this year is cutting $4 billion from its expenditures, moneys all spent in Ontario in the form of wages, supplies and rents — a direct loss to the Ontario economy. In turn, it is giving taxpayers (the richer you are, the more you get back) $4 billion in revenue, of which a good portion will be used to buy imported goods, or be spent on foreign travel. Yet the government says that this net loss to our economy will generate 725,000 jobs.

Lies. The Ontario government believes (I have never seen such great faith in all of Ontario) that lowering the personal tax rates will unleash a burst of creative activity because work will become much more rewarding. Greed at play. The result will be that people will put in extra effort to make more *money* (their god) and this will result in a dramatic rise in economic activity, which in turn will lead to greater revenue.

Hidden deficit of joblessness

Well, people who don't know the past are bound to repeat its mistakes. When Ronald Reagan came to office on the same strategy, he saw the deficit balloon out of proportion. George Bush, when campaigning against Reagan, called it voodoo economics. Once more, black magic is to be practised, this time in Ontario, and it will have the same dire effects on the social fabric as it did in the U.S.

We are already starting to see the hidden deficit that joblessness exacts. What price tag can we place on the pain of forced idleness, the agony of depression, the cost of crime, the increased alcohol use which brings family breakdown and abuse of women and children? The moral deficit caused to cure a monetary deficit is just incomprehensible.

A friend of mine who works for the Ontario Provincial Police has calculated that an incident of wife abuse costs the OPP $40,000 in police time, court costs and secretarial expense. What price tag can we place on bankruptcies of small businesses, loss of homes, loss of tourist trade, collapse of real estate values? Just imagine the rage welling up in young men and women in abandoned cities and villages, without work, without hope. Will we be safer if our tax dollars build more prisons, or should we spend money on crime prevention?

Take the example of junior kindergarten: for every $1 spent on early childhood education, $7 are saved later in health, remedial education, justice and welfare costs, according to a 25-year study from Michigan. What is cut? Junior kindergarten, of course. Short-term gain for long-term pain. Madness.

What worries me in particular is the belief among some Christians that the poor are poor because of their own mismanagement or their own stupidity, and that a bit of belt tightening will do them good. To me, the definition of poor is changing, and with it, our approach. A new world is being born and this time-between-times is an era of anxiety for many, extravagant dreams for a few and pessimism for most. Some try to cling to old orthodoxies. I sense that they are wrong but I am somewhat paralized by my own lack of vision of what is to come next.

No 'market' for giving life meaning

What *is* clear to me is that the burning issues of the day no longer involve Cold War strategies but our own immediate experience. There are all sorts of deficits waiting to be eliminated, deficits that will give life meaning and build a human society in which our gifts can be used, not stifled. But there is no "market" for those things, as the word is now understood. I mean decent places to live for everybody, regardless of their ability to pay; developing alternative sources of energy; teaching everybody how to stop destroying the environment; creating objects of beauty through painting, sculpture, crafts, and gardening; immunizing the children of the world against disease; visiting sick and old people who are alone; raising children and mentoring our neighbor's children, telling stories, nurturing a child's sense of wonder; dancing; making music; giving hope.

But money is needed, money that now goes to people such as the head of Disney who pulled in well over $200 million in three years. The chief executive officers of 23 of the 27 U.S. corporations that announced the largest layoffs in 1993 received an average pay increase of 30 per cent for making their companies leaner. Since the global companies and the present government show no interest in moral deficit, love-your-neighbor/creation activities, it will fall upon churches, non-profit groups and community service organizations to pursue the dream. So pray for miracles because they need money, money that must come from changed hearts and different attitudes.

Bert Hielema has been elected to be the first lay moderator of the Kingston Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. However, he does not intend to moderate his views.

Feature

Don't believe everything you hear about the Internet

A world-wide web of wonders

Bill Van Dyk

The most difficult part of writing about the Internet today is finding a way to compress all the important things about it into one article of reasonable length. The Internet is growing so fast that most access providers can only barely keep up with the demand. And when you consider that the essential tool of the Internet, the personal computer, is also improving and adding new capabilities at a rapid pace, it is clear that we are looking at a complex, fast-changing subject.

Before trying to explore the *meaning* of all these changes, it may be helpful to consider some of the component issues involved.

1. Is it all Hype?

Newspapers, television and even radio are all carrying more and more stories about the Internet. *Time* magazine alone has devoted four covers to "cyberspace" in the last year. It is now estimated that there are six million Internet sites globally, growing at the rate of 40 per cent this year alone. Thirty-five million Americans now have access, though only about five million use it weekly.

Hype? Yes, but in this case, it would be foolhardy to underestimate the impact the Internet will have on our future, for the numbers tell only part of the story. Consider *who* is using the Internet: a very high percentage of executives, business leaders, opinion-makers, politicians, artists and professionals. Their average income level is twice that of the general population. They are, on average, young, upwardly mobile and influential. Consider the future: almost every college student (and rapidly growing numbers of elementary and high school students) has access to the Internet.

2. Just another form of mass media?

No! The Internet is radically different from print, radio and television in one crucial aspect: it is *interactive*. Television and radio *broadcast* information to very large, relatively passive audiences (when was the last time you wrote or faxed your local television station?). The Internet, however, consists of thousands of interlinked groups and sub-groups, most of whom engage in dynamic, multi-threaded dialogues. This interactivity is what sets the Internet apart from every other media before it. It allows people with common interests to link up, share information, even mobilize. It allows journalists, writers and artists to obtain immediate access to a large public without having to first obtain the approval or support of a publisher or producer.

CP PHOTO

3. Has the Internet become a forum for pornographers and sexual predators, and hate-groups?

Time recently suggested that, in fact, it is. However, the magazine subsequently acknowledged (as did the author of the article, on the Internet itself) that its graphic presentation grossly exaggerated the problem. In the U.S. Congress, the *Time* article was quoted as stating that 85 per cent of the images on the Internet are pornographic. The actual figure was less than three per cent. Nevertheless, it is true that the Internet is almost impossible to police, and that the web sites with sexual content are among the busiest. It is also true that a user with a reasonable level of expertise can easily access pornography more explicit than anything kept behind the counters of your local variety store.

4. The Internet cannot be controlled.

Partly true. Individual sites, such as universities, can be controlled. But web browsers can leap through one site after another with the greatest ease, and no one can prevent them from reaching uncensored sites anywhere else in the world. This is part of the structural design of the Internet, as conceived by the U.S. Department of Defense at the height of the Cold War in order to thwart possible enemy sabotage. If any single component of the web breaks down, messages are simply routed through other links in other cities.

This has both good and bad implications. On the negative side, as noted above, it means there is no effective way, at present, to prevent pornography or hate mail or propaganda from being distributed to the general public. On the positive side, it means that no government or business or any other powerful, vested interest can prevent the truth from being distributed as well. In fact, computer bulletin board services (smaller, more isolated versions of the Internet) played a key role in the dismantling of communism in Eastern Europe. And Microsoft's unfair business practises were revealed on the Internet long before the U.S. Department of Justice finally acted on the allegations. (Computer magazine publishers, fearful of losing advertising revenue, simply ignored the story.) The quintessential Internet slogan is: *information wants to be free.*

5. The Internet will become controlled by commercial interests like television.

I hope not. Permit me a cautious note of optimism here. I believe that because the Internet is interactive, the majority of users will never permit it to become dominated by commercialism and shallow, trivial entertainment. For example, when a pair of lawyers in Texas attempted to advertise their services through Internet news groups, they were besieged by more than 40,000 unpleasant e-mail messages telling them to butt out. When the U.S. government tried to implement the "clipper" chip, to allow the FBI to tap computer lines on any computer, the Internet mobilized and prevented the legislation from being passed. (Since then, a new legislative package has been proposed and is likely to be passed.) My personal impression is that a large percentage of Internet users *hate* advertising. (I think most television users hate advertising too, but, unlike Internet users, they have no effective way of expressing their displeasure.)

There are commercial sites on the Internet now, and some access providers have taken to broadcasting commercial messages at the bottom of the screen, but these advertisers will never be able to control the flow of information and entertainment the way television sponsors now control that medium, and they will never be permitted to intrude on web sites or newsgroups the way they intrude on regular television programming.

6. If we were not already a global village yesterday, we certainly are one today.

Users from Norway, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Nigeria, Russia, Ethiopia, etc., all join newsgroups, send e-mail to each other, discuss technologies and the latest political and social situations, criticize movies, recommend new CDs to each other and just plain chat with each other. It is the wonderful nature of the Internet that this kind of international communication is effortless. I recently read a very moving personal expression of grief for the assassination of Yitzak Rabin which originated with an Israeli citizen in Jerusalem and made its way around the world collecting additional sympathetic comments from people everywhere.

This is powerful stuff. It gives me real hope that we may finally be entering an age where the "average" citizen will have a voice in the public affairs of a nation. Perhaps we are soon to enter an era where war itself will become unimaginable because so many of us will have friends and intimate contacts in other nations. Or am I dreaming?

(Next week: "The Internet will change our civilization.)

Bill Van Dyk is a computer consultant with a strong interest in the information media. He lives in Kitchener, Ont.

Feature

The second annual Clifford Sifton lecture on
'Being Canadian'

Major Chris A. Hadfield

One hundred years ago, Sir Clifford Sifton was trying to fill an empty land. As Minister of the Interior and a lawyer in Brandon, Man., he saw that the vast western prairie was Canada's great future. But he needed people. He needed tough, single-minded purposeful people to survive and prevail over the harsh weather conditions and the tremendously demanding home life on the prairies.

So Sir Clifford Sifton went to Eastern Europe to spread the word of freedom and of the wide open spaces that were available in this new country. He also travelled to England, where he and his representatives spoke to young tradespeople and young farmers.

There was no way that a little Canadian kid with a bad hair cut was ever going to become an astronaut.

During this time, they travelled to Yorkshire where they spoke in the small towns of Sheffield and Wakefield. In that crowd in Wakefield was a young farmer named Austin John Hadfield. He was my great-grandfather.

As a teenager in England Austin Hadfield had heard stories of open spaces in Canada. He decided that when he was a little bit older he would seek these open spaces and the bright future that he felt Canada held. So he saved his money and he bought passage to Canada. He arrived here on the pier in Halifax. He took the rest of his savings to buy a train ticket to take him as far across Canada as he could go.

He stepped off that train with one shilling in his pocket in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, in the spring of 1910. He found work there as a plumber's apprentice and a pipe fitter. Once he was established, he sent for his wife in England. They already had a daughter, and when he had left, his wife was pregnant with another child. By the time they arrived in Canada, he had a son who had been born in England. They came and joined him and set up life in Moose Jaw, living in a tent overlooking the river as their first Canadian prairie winter set in.

Life was shockingly tough when winter hit. During that first winter, as conditions worsened, his young son, Austin John Hadfield, died of cholera.

Well, my great-grandmother was pregnant again and gave birth in that tent in Moose Jaw to another daughter, Mary Hadfield. The new baby also began to get sick. By the time spring arrived, their daughter was on the verge of dying like her brother had. My great-grandfather had had enough.

They sold what they had and moved east in hopes of finding a little more tempered climate. They settled in Galt, Ontario, and there they began to put down the roots from which this Canadian grew. That sickly girl was my grandmother. She named her son Roger; and he named me — in honor of my great uncle who died out there, and my great-grandfather — Chris Austin Hadfield.

An 'impossible' dream

Like my great-grandfather, when I was a boy, I also dreamed of open spaces. I heard of a new frontier, and on a hot July night in 1969 I watched the very first human beings step onto the surface of the moon. I walked outside that night and looked up at the full moon and decided that was what I wanted to do when I grew up. I thought that was the most exciting thing a human being could do and that's where I wanted my future to take me.

But this dream was impossible at that time. There was no way that a little Canadian kid with a bad hair cut was ever going to become an astronaut. That was for super-human Americans. It was an impossible dream to achieve. So I didn't even say it out loud. I just kept it as a long-term goal for myself — something that some day, if I had the opportunity, I might be able to do.

Canada was the third country on earth to put a satellite into orbit. In 1983, when Marc Garneau, Roberta Bondar and Steve Maclean and the other Canadian astronauts were first chosen, suddenly my dream was much more tangible.

It was November 12, 1995, when I and three Americans were strapped into *Atlantis* and from the coast of Florida hurled ourselves up off the surface of the earth into space. It's an amazing ride. It seems unbelievable. The shuttle, weighing four and a half million pounds, is hurled vertically, already going 100 miles an hour by the time it clears the tower, pushing through the speed of sound, going straight up, at 20,000 feet, heading towards the heavens.

Our destination was the Space Station *Mir*. "Mir" is the Russian word for "peace" and it also means "the world." But *Mir* was built in 1986, right at the height of the Cold War when it was never considered that the American Space Shuttle would come and dock with it. At that time I was flying F-18s in defense of Canada. I would regularly fly right off the coast in an F-18 armed with missiles to intercept Soviet bombers that had enough weaponry inside them to decimate North America. We would fly up next to each other, inside Canadian airspace and bristle at each other.

Only 10 years later I had the incredible opportunity of going to a Russian space station. But while there are a lot of pointy ends sticking out of *Mir* to dock on, none were compatible with the shuttle. So the purpose of our mission was to go up to *Mir* and install a docking module. The tunnel was built in Russia, flown to Florida, installed in the American space shuttle, picked out of there by a Canadian with a *Canadarm* and attached to the Russian space station in space.

I had the honor of being the first Canadian to fly the *Canadarm* in space — we on Atlantis used it during docking to be able to see what we were doing. Canada has earned a terrific reputation in the space community as a result of the flawless and smooth operation that the *Canadarm* gives. Flying this arm and putting the module together was like flying the very best airplane.

New meaning to 'national unity'

I was also the first Canadian to ever use a ham radio in space. We had a ham radio on board the shuttle and we also had a chance, on one pass over Canada, to use this ham radio on board *Mir*. I spoke to about 100 Canadians, ripping across Canada, coast to coast from just south of Victoria, arching up north of Winnipeg and coming down just south of Nova Scotia — in 10 minutes. It gives an amazing perspective of Canada to be able to rapid fire talk to 100 Canadians while seeing the entire country roll by as one unified piece.

Chris Hadfield prepares for his space expedition

Nowhere in the cockpit of the shuttle is there any sign of nationality except on the *Canadarm* panel. Here there is a big "Canada" and a Canadian flag. It's not on any of the official NASA drawings, but the technicians — the NASA American technicians who installed the panel — feel such pride and respect that they keep sticking that decal back up every time some official person scratches it off. It gave me a tremendous feeling of pride to see this every time I looked out the back window of the shuttle.

On board *Mir*, when we were sitting with Sergei Adeev (a Russian engineer), Yuri Ghidzenko (the Commander of *Mir*), and Thomas Reiter (a German fighter pilot and test pilot), Sergei stopped a minute and looked at me and smiled and floated over to his bedroom and brought back a book. He opened up the book and pulled out a maple leaf. His daughter had collected a few leaves to send to him in one of their unmanned vehicles. She had also collected one maple leaf and sent it to him. He recognizes what Canada stands for, and what stands for Canada. He gave me this maple leaf as a gift which I put into my flight book and brought back to earth.

I would like all Canadians to step above their daily problems and disagreements and look at this land as the cosmonauts see it, and as Sergei saw it when he gave me that leaf. It's a beautiful, open place of promise. It's as different as the personalities that make it up, but it's also as unified as the snow that blankets us and the cold that purifies us and makes us all Canadians.

We are currently at a time in history when, for the first time, we are seeing planets orbiting around other suns. For the first time, as a unified planet, we are building great outposts in space. Canada is participating in that. We are fortunate enough to be in Canada, a country where a penniless immigrant, through sheer force of will and hard work, can carve out a life of comfort and success for his family and the generations that follow. We live in a country where the dreams of a small boy are nurtured and allowed to come true.

All Canadians must look at our Canada through the corrective lens of history and see this land as something not that we have earned, but something that has been given. It's a gift to us by the generations who fought and sacrificed to create it.

Major Chris Hadfield gave this speech as the second annual Clifford Sifton Lecture on "Being Canadian," on Feb. 12, 1996, in Halifax.

Synod upholds 1995 Women in office decision

Bert Witvoet

In spite of overtures from 10 classes, 14 congregations and one individual asking synod to revise last year's decision to allow classes to decide whether their churches should ordain women as elders, evangelists and ministers, synod voted to continue on the path set last year.

Almost 69 per cent of the delegates agreed "not to accede to overtures which ask for a revision of the decision of Synod 1995 regarding women in office." One of the grounds was that "the denomination is not well served by continual reversals on this issue." This made all the more sense since 14 classes have already implemented the 1995 decision.

A majority report signed by 12 delegates systematically pointed out how, at several contested points, Synod 1995 had acted properly.

In response to charges that biblical grounds were not given for the decision of 1995, the majority committee noted that, although only a single Scripture passage was cited (Romans 14), "the 1995 decision makes reference to 'numerous overtures to this synod on this issue, as well as decisions and reports of previous synods.'"

A minority report signed by four advised that synod "delete Church Order Supplement Article 3-a," the supplement that

Mary-Lee Bouma

allowed a classis to declare the word "male" inoperative so that its churches may ordain women.

This report's recommendation was not voted upon.

Although 54 delegates voted against the motion to uphold the 1995 decision, the lengthy debate that preceded the vote was held in a positive spirit.

B.C. North West delegate Pieter Hendriks told the assembly that, although he does not favor the decision of 1995, he was ready to give in because "unity is, for me, most important." He suggested that we give the 1995 option a chance to work to see whether the Lord will bless it, rather than decide beforehand what God's will might be.

One sticking point for several delegates was that previous synods never formally adopted biblical grounds for opening "authority" offices to women, whereas Synod 1994 had adopted biblical grounds for closing them.

The discussion, which lasted through the morning and afternoon of June 18, ended with a friendly admonition from Rev. George Vink of Classis California South. Referring to the biblical story of Joseph in Egypt, Vink told the delegates to "go, and do not quarrel on the way."

Synod unanimously adopted a final recommendation of the majority report to "urge our churches to be in prayer for reconciliation and healing regarding the pain and distress occasioned by decisions regarding women in office, and to exercise mutual respect for those with differing views."

Three women will march in front of synod

Mary Hulst Antonides (left) with friend Eleanor Rietkerk (Seattle)

Bert Witvoet

This year's women in office decision was very important to Mary Hulst Antonides. It meant she and two other women, Mary-Lee Bouma and Ruth Hofman, could join the "candidates' parade" on June 19, when 24 Calvin Seminary graduates sought to have synod declare them candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church.

"Hey, good news," she shouted over the telephone to her husband, Willem Antonides, right after the first crucial vote had been taken on June 18.

To fellow candidate Mary-Lee Bouma she said, "What're you going to wear tomorrow?" Both of them agreed that they would "do the suit thing."

Hulst Antonides was hired as interim pastor at Eastern Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids for a year. "It wasn't a call," she said. "It was a job." Now that she can look forward to being approved at synod and classis, she hopes to be called by Eastern Avenue Church, "the Lord willing."

She loves the ministry, she says. "You know you're called when you love your work and the Lord blesses it."

Delegates on 'women in office'

Gordon Pols: *(pastor, Cl. Toronto, and vice-president of synod):* "People say we are losing the Bible. It may not be Scripture but Christian unity that's lost. The 1995 decision gives us an opportunity to hold on to each other. We desperately need each other. I believe that the present problems of the GKN are not unrelated to the fact that the [members of the] GKN lost hold of each other after World War II."

Jerald Lion *(pastor, Cl. Columbia):* "It has been a privilege for me to see men and women working together. I believe I have seen the fulfilment of Scripture: 'In the last days your sons and daughters shall prophesy.' I pray that we will not limit the Holy Spirit's work."

Henry VandenHeuvel *pastor, Cl. Chicago South):* "I do not want to leave the CRC, but I feel I'm being pushed out. It's no longer a local option when my conscience is offended when women are at assemblies I may have to attend."

Paul Wagenmaker *(elder, Cl. Zeeland):* "I'm a contractor." (The chair, who had difficulty hearing him, interrupts: "Just think of the microphone as an ice cream cone; keep it close to your mouth.") I'm also an arbiter. I'm used to accountability. I believe the articles of the Church Order have been violated. It would be better to change Article 3-a and delete the word 'male.' If you don't do that, you are a law to yourself.

Jochem Vugteveen *(pastor, Cl. Hackensack):* We're not setting aside Scripture, and there's room in the CRC for conservatives because I'm a conservative. Synod last year began to understand that we both love the same Lord. Let's continue on the path that Synod 1995 began."

John Kamerman *(elder, Cl. Toronto):* "In debates we often become stronger and more visionary. But [the prolonged debate on this issue] has debilitated us. We have played into the hands of the devil. I'm convinced that it is the will of God to spend our energy in ministry. Some of our children and new Christians have left the church because of our fighting."

Synods will squeeze business into one week

Bert Witvoet

For the next four years, CRC synods will last one week instead of almost two. They will begin on the second Saturday afternoon of June and adjourn by Saturday noon of the following week.

Synod decided that "seven working days should provide adequate time for conducting the business of the church...; an assembly of one week's duration would make it possible for a greater number of elders to be available as nominees to attend synod...; and most North American denominations are able to conduct their business in one week."

The possibility of involving a greater diversity of elder delegates was a major argument. Of the 94 elder delegates to Synod 1994, for example, 24 per cent were educators, 34 per cent were self-employed in business, 13 per cent worked in agriculture, and 31 per cent were retired or semi-retired. These statistics are not representative of elders' occupations in the CRC in the U.S. or Canada.

To make this shorter synod possible, delegates will submit their choices of nominees for officers prior to the beginning of the assembly; the number of advisory committees will be increased by a third and the work load of each committee will be decreased by a third; the synodical prayer service will be replaced by a Sunday afternoon prayer and praise festival; and the annual banquet will be replaced by a luncheon.

It is expected that an electronic voting system and other time-saving procedures will shave off several hours as well. According to Alberta North delegate Lambert Tuininga, synod usually gets most of its work done the last few days of synod, proving that the work of synod takes as long as the time allotted for it.

A minor benefit of the new schedule will be that most father-delegates will be able to be home for Father's Day.

Church wants greater commitment to ethnic and racial diversity

Bert Witvoet

Synod 1996 has adopted 12 biblical and theological principles "for the development of a racially and ethnically diverse and unified family of God." It called the congregations, assemblies and agencies of the church to respond to these principles by praying and working for the "increased enfolding of ethnic-minority persons... in ways that reflect more fully the racial and ethnic diversity of Canada and the United States" and by making sure that ethnic-minority persons take part in leadership roles.

Synod 1992 had appointed a study committee to articulate such principles in response to requests of participants in the 1992 Multi-ethnic Conference.

The report of the study committee outlined how the initial task of home missionaries had been "to gather the sheep of Dutch descent who had scattered beyond the reach of already-established congregations in Can-ada and the United States."

It took almost a century before the CRC granted equal status to non-Dutch groups of believers.

The church was forced to deal with race relations when in the mid-60s a group of black children from Lawndale CRC were denied entrance to Timothy Christian School in Chicago. The result of that was the appointment of the Race Commission, which later on became the Synodical Committee on Race Relations (SCORR).

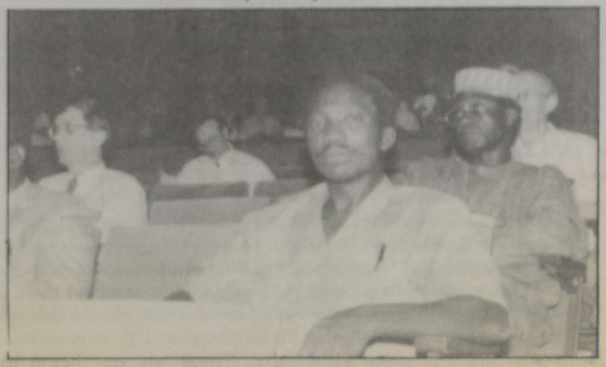
How racially and ethnically diverse is the CRC? The report explains that there are an estimated 15,000 ethnic-minority persons, or five per cent of the denomination's almost 300,000 members, in the church. This compares to U.S. national averages of between 20 and 25 per cent. It includes 7,000 members in the 50 or more Korean congregations.

The Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada is committed to addressing the needs and concerns of Indians and Metis and is seeking to fight racism in Canada.

According to the report, persons of color struggle with a sense of belonging at all levels of denominational life. Ethnic-minority persons often have to stretch their comfort zones beyond that of their majority brothers and sisters.

Synod is calling on the churches to develop racially and ethnically diverse congregations by appropriate models and strategies and to witness publicly against racism.

Throughout the debate, delegates and advisors expressed their happiness with the denomination's increasing racial and ethnic diversity. Synod celebrated this racial and ethnic diversity in conjunction with the CRC multi-ethnic conference and Reformed Ecumenical Council delegates in a program Friday night, June 14, and a worship service on Sunday night, June 16.



BERT WITVOET PHOTOS

Rev. Musa Manassah (front row) and Rev. Eliya Madaki of the Reformed Church of Christ, Nigeria.

12 'biblical and theological principles for a racially and ethnically diverse family of God'

Creation

1. The world as God created it is rich and God-glorifying in its diversity.
2. The created world, with all its diversity, has its unity in the one God, who created it through Jesus Christ.
3. The unity and diversity of the human race and of created reality reflect the unity and diversity of the triune God (namely, his oneness and threeness).

Fall

4. A fundamental effect of sin is the breakdown of community.

New Creation

5. The uniting of all things in Jesus Christ is at the heart of God's eternal plan for the ages.
6. Reconciliation with God and reconciliation with one another are inseparable in God's saving work.
7. Already in the old covenant the scope of God's mission is racially and ethnically inclusive.
8. In Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church, God gives new power to the church, power to break down walls of separation and create a community that transcends divisions of race, ethnicity, and culture.
9. The church, in its unity and diversity, is God's strategic vehicle for bringing into being his new creation.
10. God calls Christians to find their deepest identity in union with and in the service of Christ.
11. Obedience in matters of racial reconciliation calls us individually and corporately to continual repentance.
12. Christians live and work in the hope that one day the reconciliation of all things will be fully realized.

Synod uneasy with restricting academic freedom

Marian Van Til and Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — While many delegates were not entirely happy with the views on abortion of Calvin College professor Hessel Bouma, synod was reluctant to censure him regarding those views.

In response to an overture from Classis Wisconsin asking that Bouma be prevented from teaching his views on abortion, synod observed that the position Bouma takes in his book *Christian Faith, Health, and Medical Practice* varies with what the CRC, via Synod 1972, has said about abortion.

While Bouma does not favor abortion, he allows that there may be extreme circumstances in which it is necessary; he also maintains that fetuses gradually become fully human but are not initially of the same human value as you or I are.

Synod stated that greater latitude should be allowed in requiring compliance with synodical decisions than should be allowed with variations of views of Scripture or the Confessions. Synod observed that Article 29 of the CRC Church Order does not preclude such questioning of synodical decisions.

Bouma maintains that fetuses gradually become fully human but are not initially of the same human value as you or I

In the debate on the issue, Classis Wisconsin delegate Clifford Bajema, a campus chaplain, said he disagrees with Bouma's views and he wanted Bouma and Calvin College to clearly acknowledge that those views deviate from the CRC's view. Yet unlike other Wisconsin delegates, Bajema expressed reluctance to restrict Bouma's academic freedom to present his views to students.

A Reformed church shouldn't run a college or be deciding issues of academic freedom, said Bajema. But since the CRC *does* operate Calvin College it should at least stay out of the business of deciding academic freedom matters, an area in which it is not expert, he said.

Professor Hessel Bouma

CRC places further restrictions on fellowship with Dutch church

Bert Witvoet

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Fraternal relationships between the Christian Reformed Church of North America (CRC) and the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (GKN) took a further step into the direction of termination with the addition of further limitations.

BERT WITVOET PHOTOS

Dr. Klaas Runia

Synod 1983 restricted "pulpit" and "table fellowship" with the GKN, two of the six components of ecclesiastical fellowship in the Ecumenical Charter of the CRC. Those steps were taken because the CRC was troubled by the position of GKN on Scripture as set forth in "God With Us" and by its view of homosexuality and church office.

This year's synod "further restricted its ecclesiastical fellowship with the GKN for a minimum of two years by refraining from an 'exchange of fraternal delegates at major assemblies' and 'new joint action in areas of common responsibility.'"

Although synod's advisory committee sensed when it met with four GKN representatives that it was "a meeting among brothers," the committee nevertheless concluded that the differences between the two churches are deep enough to recommend further limitations on the ecclesiastical fellowship between the CRC and GKN.

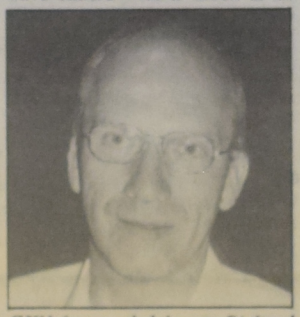
Wrong idea of relations

Dr. Klaas Runia, retired professor and editor of *Centraal Weekblad*, who was the only GKN delegate left to hear the outcome of the discussion, expressed his regret that the synod took the steps it did. In an interview with *Nederlands Dagblad* (which ND reporter Roel Sikkema shared with this reporter) Runia asserted that the CRC has a wrong idea of ecumenical relations between churches. "Churches should accept each other with all their existing differences. Of course, you are allowed to be critical of each other, but you should not try to force the other church to be like your own church."

According to Runia, the CRC will have to face the same issues the GKN had to face, such as active homosexual church members and questions regarding the authority of Scripture.

Classis Hamilton delegate Rev. John Postuma expressed his disagreement with synod's action when he told synod that we choose our friends but we do not choose our family. "The GKN is family."

He also pointed out that the GKN is "up front" with its weaknesses, and that "we would have started with a 'Look at all the wonderful things the Lord has done in our church.'" According to Postuma, the CRC has to become more vulnerable and not cut off relationships so easily.



GKN fraternal delegate Richard Vissinga

Other delegates pointed out that the CRC is doing to the GKN what it does not want the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) to do to the CRC. The OPC decided at its June general assembly that, effective at the end of the assembly next year, the OPC will restrict ecclesiastical relations with the CRC in three areas because of its position on women in office.

However, Chinese pastor and California South delegate Randy Young said that his church has a lot of new converts and that "if these people knew that we have close relations with a church that tolerates homosexuality, I would lose the majority of my congregation."

Synod restores fellowship with South African church

Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — On the same day synod decided to restrict fellowship with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) it voted to restore fellowship with the Reformed Church of South Africa.

Fellowship with that church had been suspended in 1989 because the church had "failed to produce clear evidence that [it] is not committed to apartheid... [and] has never publicly declared apartheid a sin and the theological support of it a heresy."

A continued relationship was seen as a "stumbling block to the CRCs commitment to be a multiracial denomination, both locally and internationally."

The situation has changed since then and the RCSA is now pursuing racial reconciliation within itself and with formerly black and "colored" Reformed churches. Thus the CRC wanted to welcome it back.

Synod follows precedents of 'language classes'

Bert Witvoet

For the first time in the life of the denomination a classis has been formed on the basis of language. Synod approved the formation of a Korean-speaking classis out of Classes Greater Los Angeles and California South. The arrangement is to last for a maximum of 15 years.

There was a precedent when Classis Red Mesa was formed in order to do justice to the cultural needs of Native Americans. Other denominations such as the Presbyterian Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have already established Korean classes or assemblies.

It was also noted that the original Dutch Church Order of Dordrecht allowed for the formation of German- and French-speaking classes. The request for a Korean-speaking classis had come to synod last year, but that synod withheld action until a clearer strategy for implementation had been designed.

Thirteen Korean-speaking congregations will make up the new classis. It was noted that Korean delegates to the two California classes tended to be first-generation Korean pastors and elders who had a difficult time following the procedures.

It was hoped that other Korean congregations without denominational affiliations would be encouraged to join the CRC if they could be part of a Korean-speaking classis.

According to Peter Borgdorff, CRC executive director of ministries, Koreans are not used to structural relationships, but tend to solve problems by listening to older people who have good standing in the community. One of the conditions of the agreement is that the Korean-speaking classis "will sponsor an intensive two-day course on ecclesiology, structure and church order for pastors, elders and deacons."

Guidelines for evaluation as synod will monitor this classis will be how well the classis adheres to the Church Order, participates in the work of denominational boards and agencies, contributes classical and synodical ministry shares and relates to neighboring classes.

Congregations may transfer from one classis to another

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (Synod News Office) — While synod would not accede to overtures requesting that churches be allowed to form new classes along ideological lines, it reaffirmed that a church may transfer from its current classis to a classis "more congenial to its congregational temperament." In fact, since 1922 churches have had that freedom, though it seems to be a little known provision in the Church Order.

Synod responds to church burnings in southern U.S.

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen and Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — On June 18 the CRC synod passed a resolution lamenting the ongoing burnings of dozens of black churches in the southern U.S. over the last year. The fires have recently escalated.

The burnings have prompted a personal statement of sorrow and support from President Clinton and the FBI is involved in looking for the culprits, who are feared to be white supremists.

Synod's resolution stated: "We express support for our brothers and sisters who have suffered because of these actions. We call on those responsible for the burnings to cease their actions, repent of their sins, and step forward that justice be served. May God lead us to be reconciled with one another."

Delegates spent time in prayer for the congregations and individuals affected by the fires.

CRWRC informed synod that it is now involved in contacting pastors of some of the burned churches, offering help. CRWRC may also participate in a joint response with other disaster relief agencies.

REC Assembly

Reformed Ecumenical Council celebrates 50 years of tumult and troth

All stories by Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) held its 50th anniversary meeting from June 4-15 at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Mich., the city which was the site of the first meeting in 1946.

The 61 delegates represented 30 Reformed denominations from Australia to Zimbabwe and 18 countries in between; observers came from four additional countries. Joining the delegates were several dozen advisors, speakers, fraternal delegates and official observers.

New members welcomed

Though five member churches had resigned since the last assembly in 1992, five new ones were welcomed this year: The Reformed Church of East Africa in Kenya, the Reformed Church of Korea, the CCAP (Nkhoma Synod) in Malawi, the Christian Reformed Church of Myanmar, and the Evangelical Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria.

This milestone anniversary was celebrated at a festive banquet held at the Van Andel Museum in downtown Grand Rapids. REC delegates and guests were joined there by the nearly 190 Christian Reformed Church synod delegates who were meeting at Calvin College, next door to where the REC was meeting.

The emphasis was on unity, so it was appropriate that the 1996 REC assembly was an amiable one, marked by none of the controversy of some past assemblies.

The assembly was preceded by a week-long conference covering topics related to theology (the uniqueness of Christianity), mission (ministry among the poor and suffering), and youth (preparing young people to confront the spirits of the age).

The REC meets every four years in different parts of the world. In the year 2000 the assembly plans to meet in Indonesia for the first time.

COURTESY REC

REC, Grand Rapids 1996

Musings on being 'Reformed' and 'ecumenical'

Given the propensity for Reformed denominations to divide, some people might be forgiven for thinking that "Reformed" and "ecumenical" are mutually exclusive terms. But they aren't always; and the Reformed Ecumenical Council (formerly Reformed Ecumenical Synod) has been proving that for 50 years.

For many years I've been aware that the REC has produced booklets and studies on a range of theological topics. But how many people in the CRC in North America know about these, or about the other work the REC has done and is doing?

A 'useful' organization?

As I watched my first session of the REC Assembly, Grand Rapids 1996, I initially asked myself whether such an organization is of any real *use*, whether it truly affects any church members lives. Or, I wondered, is it essentially an expensive, self-perpetuating gathering of globe-trotting church bureaucrats who meet in a different corner of the world every four years? I figured even Third World church leaders could become bureaucrats if schooled well in our North American Reformed ways if given half a chance.

The answers would soon be obvious.

From word to deed

Through the discussions it became apparent that member churches from the Third World, many of them relatively isolated within secular, Islamic or tribal cultures, depend on the REC for help and resources in many ways that we in the asset-abundant CRC do not need to.

Secondly, what I heard was not abstract theology or the "right views" on doctrinal non-essentials, but theology related to concrete social matters with which each human culture respresented there must grapple: "sanctity of life" issues; combatting racism; how to present Christ as the unique Savior to a hurting world which increasingly sees salvation in many other sources; how to put pressure on oppressive governments, such as that in Nigeria, which are persecuting thousands of citizens, and especially Christians; how to offer the "cup of cold water" to financially poor member churches.

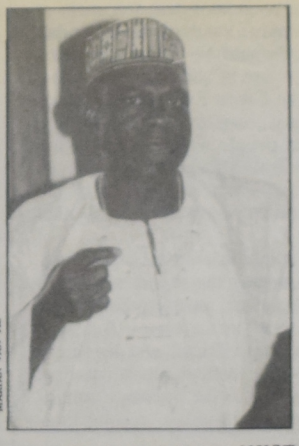
That emphasis on faith in *action* surprised me at first because I was expecting theological debate that might or might not be translatable into action in the countries represented. That kind of debate, sometimes fairly abstract, took up much of the past. Several North American delegates pointed out to me that they felt this Grand Rapids '96 assembly marked a definite shift in focus from the rather contentious Athens 1992 assembly and other previous assemblies.

The shift was toward active diaconal ministry; toward member churches helping one another solve ongoing and/or immediate, concrete problems. They were happy about that. Yes, you have to think carefully, was the consensus, but in a secular world fast approaching a new millenium, "We can't afford to argue theology."

REC addresses crisis in Nigeria

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The REC will send a letter of appeal to Nigerian dictator General Sani Abacha imploring him to desist from his unlawful detention of citizens and numerous other undemocratic acts. (The REC has four member churches in Nigeria.) Member churches are encouraged to "engage in earnest prayers for peace with justice and good government in Nigeria, safety for its people, and release of all political prisoners held incommunicado by the military."

Churches are also encouraged to petition the governments in their own countries to apply diplomatic pressure on the government of Nigeria. The churches will provide material help to their fellow Christians in Nigeria, should they need it.



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Confronting Christ as only Savior may be biggest question for the church in next decade

All stories by Marian Van Til

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — In response to increasing religious syncretism (mixing and adopting beliefs from various religions), to the presumed relativity of Christian truth on the part of many in our secular world, and even to the presumed saving value of good works, the REC has adopted a "testimony" on the "unique person and work of Christ."

The testimony came out of a report commissioned at the 1992 Athens assembly. In approaching missions it is important to "testify clearly to the uniqueness of Christ" [as the] only mediator between God and humankind, said REC.

This issue should be studied in depth because "the question [is] a very large one, probably the most significant question facing the Church in the next decade," said the steering committee chosen to look into the matter.

The committee and its 10 contributors presented their study in a 29-page booklet to this year's assembly, ending with the aforementioned testimony.

Equipping to address cultures

The report and testimony were adopted in slightly changed form. Some changes in wording, mostly minor, were suggested by REC's advisory committee and were approved by the whole assembly.

The testimony states in semi-poetic language that Christ is our only Savior, our only mediator, our only teacher, our only Lord and liberator, our only hope, and our only joy.

REC has also decided to appoint an international study committee to examine religious pluralism, the biblical view of other religions, and what all these issues mean for communicating the gospel to the present world. As well, REC will immediately begin to prepare a series brochures on "how to present the uniqueness of Christ to people of other faiths in order to equip its member churches for their missionary tasks."

REC studies 'just stewardship of land and creation'

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — The REC wants to widely distribute a book-length (200-page) report it commissioned on "The Just Stewardship of Land and Creation." The report was edited by environmental scientist Dr. Calvin DeWitt, with contributions by Drinah Banda-Nyirenda, Delmar Vander Zee, Arie Van Eek and Richard Van Houten.

The REC is recommending the study to its member churches for their study and use, and hopes to hear at the next assembly in 2000 exactly how churches have used the book and how helpful (or not) it has been.

General secretary Richard Van Houten said the report's compilers "hope it is a stimulant" to greater care and study of the environment. CRC delegate Eunice Vander Laan told other delegates she believed the book "would be really helpful on the local level." She invisioned its use in adult Sunday school classes. Antonios Koulouris of the Greek Evangelical Church also thought the report was "very, very good," and said he intended to give it to a number of people who are involved in ecology in his own country. Several other delegates pointed out that the book contains astute Christian analysis of the environmental situation of the kind they have not seen in other publications.

Initially, the REC's advisory committee on this issue suggested that a specific letter accompany the report when it is disseminated to the churches. The letter, among other things, suggested that the report is "Western" in its biases. But most delegates saw the letter as being too critical; and leaving a negative impression of an over-all excellent report was not what they wanted to do. So it was left to the Interim Committee to formulate a letter to the member churches "recommending the study and use of the report."

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REC to develop strategies to combat racism

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Race relations have come up repeatedly in the 50 year history of the REC. The Athens 1992 assembly asked member churches to report to this assembly on race relations in their countries and churches, and what their churches are doing about it. The only item received was the GKN's report "Breaking Down the Walls."

A study of racism was proposed at this assembly but an academic study was met with resistance. "We don't need to study its causes and so on, " said a Nigerian delegate. "We *know* what it is!" So the REC will move to action. It will "develop a strategy to combat racism." At the same time, it will pay attention to the nature, causes, manifestations and effects of racism.

Meanwhile, REC will urge its member churches to:

* speak out clearly and strongly on racism;
* stand up and speak out when racism occurs in their society;
* assess the level of racism in their own church communities;
* provide educational material and training programs on the subject;
* urge the member churches' theological schools to give attention in their curricula to racism and methods of combatting it;
* encourage pastors to initiate discussion of racism within their own communities and guide the debate in a manner consistent with the Scriptures and the Kingdom of God;
* encourage pastors or groups within church communities to promote fellowship (koinonia) between people of different racial groups in the conviction that personal contacts will help overcome prejudice;
* urge pastors and councils to deal with racism in proclamation and prayer.

REC addresses 'sanctity of life' issues

Will make resources available

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Rather than appoint a study committee to "research and render judgments on all the ethical issues related to the sanctity of human life" with which REC member churches have to deal, the REC declared "that the sanctity of human life rests on [some key] biblical principles." They are:

a. God created human beings in his image, that is, with the ability and calling to know God, obey him, and enjoy his fellowship.

b. Though human sin has subsequently damaged this divine image, it cannot obliterate it.

c. God has graciously provided redemption for human beings in Christ and has begun to restore their nature through the Holy Spirit.

d. The redemption of human beings in Christ will mean full deliverance from the effects of sin and complete restoration of fellowship with God in the new creation.

e. Therefore, since God cherishes human life, everyone is obligated to protect it and shield it from the devaluation of its intrinsic, God-endowed worth.

f. The Lord calls his church to testify to these principles, to do everything possible to resist any violation of them which oppresses or destroys our fellow human beings, and to aid and comfort the victims of evil.

In addition, the REC Interim Committee will, via a volunteer, begin to collect and catalogue materials published by member churches on these issues, including abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, infertility, violence. An annotated bibliography on these subjects, with regular updating, will be made available to REC members.

REC assembly chair Dr. Henk DeWaard of Australia

Where the spirit is, there is freedom

Chapter & Verse

Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
* Laura Smit
Al Wolters

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor.3:17).

Many of the people with whom I work find the Holy Spirit baffling. Scripture seems to teach that all Christians ought to have the Holy Spirit, and yet most of us in the mainline church have never had the dramatic experiences of tongue-speaking or healing which seem to be evidence of the Spirit's presence. Here in this third chapter of 2nd Corinthians, Paul speaks of what seems to be a less exotic mark of the Holy Spirit's presence — *freedom.*

When we hear the promise that the Spirit brings freedom, most of us, I suspect, think that we know what that means. To be free is to be liberated, not bound.

No interference, no rules

To be free is to be autonomous, not accountable to anyone else. So freedom becomes an excuse for doing what I want to do, without any interference.

It is also an excuse for not interfering with anyone else. So if I disapprove of my neighbor's actions but don't really want to get involved in discussing them and don't want to accept any responsibility for what he or she is doing, I may say: "Hey, it's a free country," by which I mean: "Poison yourself if you want to. It's not my problem."

Clearly, this sort of freedom is not what Paul has in mind when he speaks about the freedom which is brought by the Spirit. The Spirit always builds up the Body of Christ and knits believers together. The Spirit never leads us into autonomy or separation from one another.

Another idea we sometimes have when we think of freedom is that it means license to do whatever we want. Freedom means having no rules at all. So when we think of being free we think of being allowed to do the sorts of things which rules forbid. For a child, freedom doesn't just mean not having a set bedtime; freedom means staying up very late. For someone on a restrictive diet, freedom doesn't mean no longer craving sweets; it means eating all the sweets you crave. Clearly the Spirit doesn't bring this kind of freedom, either.

Freedom to be what God intended

The Spirit brings the freedom to become the person you know you really want to be. To be good. To be holy. To be righteous. To go to sleep each night knowing that you have hurt no one, that there's nothing shameful in your day either in act or in thought; no moments of pettiness, selfishness, laziness or cowardice which need to make you cringe as you review them. Wouldn't it be wonderful to be so free!

Imagine yourself having been in an accident which has left you stranded and hurt at the side of the road in the rain. You are bleeding, dirty, wet, smelly — generally disgusting and unpleasant. Now imagine some passing motorists stop to help you, and — despite your unappealing condition — allow you into their car and speak to you with gentleness and respect. Surely, you would be grateful to be accepted and loved even in the midst of your disgustingness.

But would that be enough? Wouldn't you also hope to be offered a hot shower and some clean clothes, and some bandages for your cuts and bruises? Wouldn't it be discouraging to be dropped off at your destination just as smelly, wet and wounded as you were when you were picked up? Wouldn't real love insist not only on accepting you but also on transforming you?

Transforming love

That's the love which God offers us when the Spirit's sanctifying work begins in our lives. We are constantly frustrated by our own natures. As Paul says in Romans 7: "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." We are driven by temper, annoyance, desire, insecurity, pride.... Even if we are completely free from outside restrictions, from rules and from the interference of other people, we are still slaves to the old nature at work within us.

This is not what we want to be. We don't freely choose to be petty, selfish, little people. It is a slavery from which we need to be set free. The freedom offered by the Spirit is not the freedom of autonomy. It is not the freedom of license. It is the freedom of goodness. The primary sign of the Spirit's presence is not the dramatic advent of wind and fire, but rather the transforming of our characters to the point that we become people capable of doing the good we want to do.

Laura Smit is a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA) who is currently doing doctoral work in philosophical aesthetics at Boston University, Boston, Mass.

Ecumenical magazine calls China's official church 'a big problem'

GANSU PROVINCE, China (Compass) — The April issue of *Bridge*, an ecumenical magazine focusing on the church of China, contains a devastating report on the state of the Three Self Patriotic Movement — China's official Protestant church — in Gansu province. Entitled "The TSPM as a Big Problem," the report alleges that the ailing and aged leadership of the church in the province has stifled church growth, allowed the government to profiteer from church properties, and driven leaders of integrity underground.

Twelve pastors with an average age of 75 are responsible to guide the 50,000 plus Christians of Gansu province, yet they refuse to ordain any more clergy.

The report alleges that they were all initially appointed because they had been "patriots" in the 1950s, a term for one who denounced other Christians as imperialists and took vows of absolute loyalty to the Communist Party. Their reputation for bickering and disunity was even remarked upon in a report issued by the director for religious affairs, Ma Dexiang, who wrote, "They are only interested in the practice of 'what I say goes.'"

All this has had the effect of alienating many good Christian leaders. One such is Li Moxi, who was ordained an elder in the Lanzhou church before the war and spent a year in prison in the 1950s for having a connection with Wang Ming Dao — a famous church leader in Beijing who refused to register his church with the Three Self and spent more than 20 years in prison. He can no longer preach, has been denied a monthly allowance and is forced to speak only in underground churches.

The editor of *Bridge*, Deng Zhaoming, broadened the scope of the report's significance to the whole of the Three Self movement throughout China. He called for all of the Three Self leaders to repent on their denunciations of other Christians and stressed that they not just make a few apologies, but truly turn around and fight for truth with the same vigor as they once opposed it.

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Church press quotes

Rev. Jacob Kuntz

Mother's questions

In* The War Cry *of May 11 Major Ed Forster tells the story of how he, as a young Army officer, learned an important lesson. He learned it from his mother who, with her husband, visited their son on his first assignment.

"It was midnight. My parents were visiting their newly commissioned Salvation Army officer son in his first appointment. The doorbell startled us all. I tried to act calmly for my parents' sake. 'Go to bed, folks,' I said, 'I'll take care of it.'

"The unkempt man at the door was tall, thin and unshaven. 'How can I help you?' I asked.

"'I'd like a meal ticket,' he said. It was a railroad town and we frequently saw transients.

"His request confused me. 'It's midnight,' I said. 'Which meal do you want a ticket for?'

"'A meal ticket for breakfast, I guess,' he said.

"'There are no restaurants open at this time of night,' I said, 'if you'll come back in the morning I'll be happy to help you.'

"'OK,' he said, and then turned and walked away.

"When I looked up the stairs, there was my mother standing half-in and half-out of the doorway. She had a concerned look on her face. 'What was it?' she asked.

"'It was a man looking for a meal ticket. He's going to come back in the morning.'

"'Where's he going to sleep tonight?' she asked.

"Somewhat embarrassed by my inexperience and her concern I said, 'I don't know, Mom. I didn't ask him.'

"Then, as an afterthought, I said, 'He must have a plan.'

"Mothers usually ask the right questions. God seems to have endowed them with built-in antennas for such loving inquiries. The man at the door was somebody's son, and my mother, with a practical concern, was interested in his well-being.

"After I'd given the man his breakfast ticket at 6 a.m., I discovered where he slept. It was in the Army's station wagon which I'd left unlocked.

"'Dear Lord, give me the wisdom and compassion of my mother. Help me to ask the right questions in love.'"

Honesty as victim

The* Catholic Register *of May 6 contends that at present there is a war going on between "political elites" and those "who put them in power," and that the first casualty in this war is honesty. According to this Roman Catholic weekly it happens too often that government representatives are not honest with the citizens of Canada. There is "an explosion of examples." Some of these examples are:

"In Ottawa, Gen. Jean Boyle, chief of defence staff, once one of the most respected and trusted positions in the land, admits he approved doctoring military documents relating to the Somalia scandal. His excuse for not admitting this when asked six months ago: he forgot. It happened so long ago; 1993 to be exact.

"Down the street, the Liberal government tells the country why it cannot keep its 1993 election promise to replace the goods and services tax. 'We made a mistake,' says Finance Minister Paul Martin, without a hint of a smirk. 'It was an honest mistake.'

"Some mistake. It's hard to fathom how a party with so many talented financial wizards, such as Martin, could not have known about the readily available volumes of research done on the GST and its alternatives.

"Here in Toronto, Ontario Premier Mike Harris insists his promised taxcut will create even more jobs than the Conservatives previously thought: a figure of some 725,000.

"It doesn't matter that treasurer Ernie Eves admits he has no research to back up that boast. Or that most experts, whether on the political left or right, agree that a tax cut on the scale that Harris is talking about will only hurt the economy. Harris would rather pretend he can make it so, just by saying it is so. That takes real chutzpah.

"We could go on forever, if we had the space. Once, to be accused of lying was an insult worth fighting a duel to the death over. A cabinet minister with any integrity at all would immediately resign if he misled Parliament even unintentionally.

"No longer. The virtue of honesty is a victim of a time when the only virtue is *winning*, at any cost. It is a very high cost indeed, and one that we all pay."

What churches want in their ministers

This is the time of year when seminary graduates who have finished their studies are considered by "vacant" churches looking for a new pastor. The editor of* The Presbyterian Record *(May 1996) notices that things have changed in this respect. Not the academic credentials of a candidate, but his or her competence for the ministry is what counts today.

"Thirty years ago, a congregation's primary concern was the candidate's paper credentials. Did he or she graduate from a recognized seminary with suitable grades, the higher the better?

"Today, congregations evaluate candidates differently. Paper credentials remain significant for Presbyterians, but their importance has diminished. Search committees today want to know what you have done lately — in the parish. The fact that you may have served as a college professor or the editor of a church magazine carries little or no weight. In fact, it may deter the committee from considering you. If you want to go into parish work now, they want to know why you were not always doing it.

"At the top of the list of their priorities stands the question of how competent you have been in working with congregations. By competence they mean: Can you preach well, relating your message to the realities the congregation faces? Are you a sensitive pastor who loves people? Can you provide strong and effective leadership?

"Unfortunately, a mentality has grown up among us which believes whatever happens in the seminary is something far removed and irrelevant to everyday congregational life. In fact, probably nothing else will impact more upon the local congregation than what happens in the seminary. Therefore, all of us must strive to build closer ties between seminaries and congregations. Professors will need to do more of their teaching and students more of their learning in congregational settings.

"Although, as Presbyterians, we pride ourselves in the prominent role of laity in our churches, reality suggests the health of a local Presbyterian congregation depends more on the quality of its minister than does the life of a Roman Catholic parish upon the quality of the priest. We may not like that. We may wish it were not true. But that remains reality for Presbyterian congregations nearing the end of the 20th century."

Summer psalm

Finally, for all those who soon will enjoy the delights of summer, this "psalm for summer." We found it in* The Mennonite Reporter *of May 13.

"When I see the morning sun cast shadows on nearby trees, and the glistening leaves quietly waving out to me, you remind me, O God, that I am welcome in this creation, filled with the presence of life, filled with the presence of you.

"When I close my eyes and feel a passing breeze press gently on my cheek, it's your breath, O God, tenderly kissing me and wishing me well.

"Children playing at the beach, carefully building mansions of sand, then fighting over each other to stomp them down — even in the cranky cries of overheated children, I hear your whisper of the will to live, the will to be free.

"Let me hear your voice in the chirping birds outside my window. Let me notice your hands shaping rivers and hills and new places I see. Let me feel your love as I stop to eat at the table with friends — these are your children asking me to dine with you.

"As the mid-day heat drags heavily into the night, let me feel in every pore how nearly you surround me, not with an oppressive love, but with mountain springs of fresh cool liberation.

"As I rise in the morning when I wish to continue my sleep, as I leave for work when I'd rather holiday or play, let these struggles in my life remind me of you. You placed me here to sift through the mixture of joy and delight, of pain and sorrow, to find meaning in every day of this most wonderful season we call summer. Amen."

Jacob Kuntz is a retired Christian Reformed pastor who lives in Brampton, Ont., where he works half-time in Holland Christian Homes.

Classifieds

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(Revised February 1, 1995)

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Grandfather of:
Mary Bom & Teo Byl (fiance) — Simcoe, Ont.
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Thank You

BOONSTRA:

We would like to thank everyone for making our 50th wedding anniversary celebration so special. Your cards and best wishes meant a lot to us. Above all, thanks to our heavenly Father for keeping us in His care for these many years.

Fred and Dorothy Boonstra.

PRINS:

Above all we, Karl and Johanna Prins, thank God for our 60th anniversary. Thanks to everyone who helped to make it even more a very special day. Thank you very much.

Karl and Johanna Prins, Holland Chr. Homes, 7900 McLauglin Rd., CPH02, Brampton, ON L6V 3N2

Marriages

BREUKELMAN/HOBERS:

Fred and Sylvia Breukelman and Jerry and Mary Hobers are pleased to announce the marriage of their children

FREDERICK JAMES
to
DOREEN CRYSTAL

Wedding text: Col.3: 12b, 14.

The ceremony will take place, D.V., on Saturday, June 29, 1996, at 2 p.m., at the First Chr. Ref. Church in Hamilton, Ont.

Future address: 5513-Reg. Road 69, R.R.1, St. Ann's, On L0R 1Y0

SCHOLTEN/DEWEERD:

Jack and Theresa Scholten are pleased to announce the marriage of their daughter

TRACY
to
MIKE

son of John and Mary DeWeerd. The marriage will take place, D.V., July 27, 1996, at 2:30 p.m., in the Drayton Chr. Ref. Church, Pastor Dave Tigchelaar officiating.

Marriages

SIKMA/BREMER:

With thankfulness to God, Mr. and Mrs. John Sikma and Mr. John Bremer are pleased to annouce the marriage of their children

ANITA
to
JONATHAN

on Saturday, July 6, 1996, at Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church, Bowmanville, Ont.

Future address: 36 Kelly Street, Waterdown, ON

Anniversaries

Sarnia Hamilton
1971 July 2 1996

With praise and thanksgiving to God, we wish to announce the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents

JOHN and LILLIAN BUESINK
(nee DE JONG)

We thank God for His faithfulness and pray for His continued blessings in the years to come. Congratulations Mom and Dad.

With love from your children:
Cheryl
Lorraine & Ryan Grypstra
Jeremy
Joshua

Home address: 217 Columbia Dr., Hamilton, ON L9C 3Y8

40th Wedding Anniversary

On June 30, 1956,

PHIL and MIEP JAGER
(ROMKEMA)

were united in marriage in Rexdale, Ont.

Congratulations and love on this joyous occasion from your children and grandchildren.

We pray for many more years of love and happiness.

"For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (Ps.100:5).

Rolinda & Peter Minnesma
Daniel, Lisa, Steven, Tyler
Janette & Harold Schuringa
Whitney, Jennifer, Erik
Phil & Josie Jager
Philip
Robert & Marcella Jager
Caleb, Jonah
Christopher Jager

Address: 1560 Crombie Road, Mississauga, ON L5J 3Y3, (905) 823-1509

Personal

35-Year-old single Christian mother, living in Southwestern B.C., **would like to meet a single Christian man**, 35-45 years of age for friendship and/or possible relationship. Please send letters to: **File#2648, c/o Christian Courier, 4-261 Martindale Rd., St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1**

Anniversaries

Netherlands Whitby, Ont.
1946 1996

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph.5:21).

It is with joy and thanksgiving to God that we announce the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents

EELKE RYPSTRA
and
AKKE (TJALSMA) RYPSTRA

on July 4, 1996, the Lord willing.

We thank the Lord that they have been able to be together these many years and pray that God will continue to be with them. Congratulations Dad and Mom, Grandpa and Grandma. With love and our best wishes,

Wilma & Herman Slot — Ajax, Ont.
Michelle & Gordon (Mickenzie, Gavin), Kimberly, Tanya, Jessica
Obie & Ria Rypstra — St. Ann's, Ont.
Joel, Jonathan, Nathan, Rebecca, David
William & Wilma Rypstra — Georgetown, Ont.
Kevin, Shannon, Shaylyn
Trudy & Wade Coburn — Bowmanville, Ont.
Matthew
Annette & Peter Hamilton — Oshawa, Ont.
Geoffrey, Alicia, Laura, Graham
Fred & Michelle Rypstra — Whitby, Ont.
Stephen, Ryan, Erin
David Rypstra — Bowmanville, Ont.

Open house on Saturday, July 6, 1996, from 2-4 p.m., at Providence Place, Durham Chr. Homes, 100 Glenhill Dr. S. (1st floor), Whitby, Ont.

Address: 208-100 Glenhill Dr. S., Whitby, ON L1N 8R4

1956 July 13 1996

With joy and thanksgiving we announce the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

TONY and CORRIE
VANDERWIEL
(nee DEROVER)

We hope and pray for God's continued guidance in the years to come.

Congratulations and love from:
Corrine & Sam DeRuiter — Enderby, B.C.
Kathryn, Rachel, Sandy, Herb, Desiree
Adrian Vanderwiel & Elaine Wirrell — Saskatoon, Sask.
Freda & Harley Middel — Lethbridge, Alta.
Anthony, Michael, Brendan

We invite you to share this event with us at an Open House, Friday, July 12, 1996, in Emmanuel Chr. Ref. Church, Langley, B.C., from 7:30-10:00 p.m.

Best wishes only.

Home address: 20286-27 Ave., Langley, BC V2Z 1X3

Anniversaries

1971 July 10 1996

"As long as we love one another, God will live in us, and His love will be complete in us" (1 John 4:12).

With joy and thankfulness to God, we announce the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents

HARRY and BETTIE
VREUGDENHIL
(nee OOSTING)

Mom and Dad, we love you so much and praise God for blessing you in these 25 years of marriage in which your love has grown ever stronger. We thank you for your constant guidance, support and love and we pray that God will continue to bless you in the years to come. With love and congratulations:

Helena & Jeff Meyer — Dunnville, Ont.
Tanya Vreugdenhil — Dunnville, Ont.
Paul Vreugdenhil — Dunnville, Ont.
Vanessa Vreugdenhil — Dunnville, Ont.

We invite you to share in this joyous occasion with us at an open house on Saturday, July 13, 1996, at their home from 1-5 p.m.

Obituaries

Adorp, Gr. Shallow Lake, Ont.
1922 - 1996

On Friday afternoon, May 24, 1996, the Lord took unto himself, our dearly beloved husband, father and grandfather

JELLE (JOE) DEVRIES

Sadly missed by his wife, the former Anny den Engelse and his children:
Corrine & Herman
Durk & Alma
Jim
Jerry & Denise
Henry & Carol
and 16 grandchildren.

The memorial service took place on May 28, 1996, at the Shallow Lake Community Church, Rev. Roy Cowieson officiating.

Correspondence address:
Mrs. A. DeVries, R.R.#2, Shallow Lake, ON N0H 2K0

Personal

Born-again Christian young woman seeking friendship with gentleman, 35-45. Enjoys reading, outdoors, dancing and fellowship. Please write to **Violet, 18E Gordon St., Belleville, ON K8P 3E3.**

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(403) 362-2653

CLASSIFIEDS

Obituaries

Zwanenburg, NH Chatham, Ont.
Feb. 24, 1905 - June 9, 1996
Saved by grace.

In full assurance of her salvation the Lord called home his child

ADRIANA BAX

on Sunday, June 9, 1996, in her 92nd year at the Meadow Park Nursing Home, Chatham, Ont.

Beloved wife of Jack Bax. Dedicated mother, grandmother and great-grandmother whose caring will be lovingly remembered. Born in Zwanenburg, the Neth., in 1905. Daughter of the late Cornelis Verhoog and the former Johanna Slegers.

Dear mother of:
Joanne VanderPloeg — Chatham, Ont.
Mary Hummelen — Chatham, Ont.
Margaret & Albert Herfst — Chatham, Ont.
Ruth Bax — Mount Forest, Ont.
Gertie & Adrian Wielhouwer — Owen Sound, Ont.
Jean & Peter VanHelden — Chatham, Ont.
Clarence & Lorraine Bax — Thornhill, Ont.
Art & Barb Bax — Cargill, Ont.
Bernard & Tina Bax — Sarnia, Ont.
Hank & Margriet Bax — Thamesford, Ont.
Herb & Janette Bax — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Fred Bax — Toronto, Ont.

Loving grandmother to 37 grandchildren and 35 great-grandchildren. Loving sister of Margaret Slegers of Blenheim, Marijke Herfst and Ger Verhoog of the Netherlands. Predeceased by a son Jim Bax (1994), sons-in-law Bert Hummelen (1975) and Bill VanderPloeg (1995), one sister and four brothers.

Prior to her marriage Mrs. Bax was an organist in the Netherlands for 10 years and she was an organist for the First Chr. Ref. Church in Chatham, Ont., for 30 years before retiring in 1985. She was also a faithful choir member and was a participant in many activities of her church.

Zij is verlost, God heeft haar welgedaan.

The funeral took place on Wednesday, June 12, 1996, at the First Chr. Ref. Church, Chatham, Ont., with Rev. Sid Sybenga officiating. Interment in Maple Leaf Cemetery, Chatham, Ont.

Correspondence address:
Mrs. Margaret Herfst, 139 Mercer St., Chatham, ON N7M 4B3

Teachers

ST. CATHARINES, Ont.: Calvin Memorial Chr. School may need to fill a **40% Grade 6** position beginning in September 1996. Please call **Mrs. Karen Gerritsma** if interested at **(905) 937-6302.**

Obituaries

Makkinga, Fr. Ottawa, Ont.
Aug. 16, 1913 - June 10, 1996
Psalm 42

After a lengthy illness God called home our beloved Mother, Oma and Great-Oma

LUTSKE REITSMA HOOGEVEEN

She is now rejoicing in heaven with our Dad who went home July 16, 1969.

Isabel & Kees van Dieen
Renee & Charles, Jodie & Paul, Sonja
Gerry & Janny Hoogeveen
Fransisca & Henry (Brandon), Marc
Coba & John van Noort
Michael & Jennifer, Matthew
John & Henny Hoogeveen
John & Tracey (Kayla), Eraina & Pete (Diana), Krista

Also survived by her sister Jo and sister-in-law Jel and many nieces and nephews in the Netherlands.

The celebration of Mom's life took place in the Calvin Chr. Ref. Church in Ottawa, Ont., on June 13, 1996, with Pastor Ken Gehrels officiating.

Correspondence address: I. van Dieen, 107 Starwood Dr., Nepean, ON K2G 1Z6

Boelenslaan St. Thomas
the Neth. Ont.
Jan. 1914 - June 1996
The Lord is my Shepherd.

On Thursday afternoon, June 6, 1996, the Lord called home His child

HINKE SPOELSTRA
(nee BYMA)

Loving wife of Sietse Spoelstra.

Dear mother of:
Jan & Tine Spoelstra — St. Thomas, Ont.
Antonia & Martin Speelman — Mt. Brydges, Ont.

Beloved Beppe of nine grandchildren and spouses, and 20 great-grandchildren.

It was Mom's wish to be home with her Lord. She will be sadly missed but lovingly remembered for all she has meant to us.

The funeral service was held on June 10, 1996, at the First Chr. Ref. Church, St. Thomas, Ont., with Rev. John Heidinga officiating.

Correspondence address:
S. Spoelstra, 97 Southdale Rd., St. Thomas, ON N5R 1C1

Church News

Christian Reformed Church

Classis meeting:

Classis Chatham will meet in regular session Saturday Sept. 14, 1996, at Second CRC, Sarnia, Ont. All agenda materials must reach the stated clerk by Tuesday, Aug. 6.

Jan H.G. Vandergeest, Stated Clerk.

Obituaries

Hijum Sarnia
1930 1996
May 3

On Friday morning another day has just begun.
For death is but to greet the dawn and not the setting of the sun.

JACOB SWART

was taken home to be with his Lord, after suffering from Mono Neuritus Multiplex.

He will be sadly missed by his loving wife Gertrude Swart, children and grandchildren.

Larry & Metty
Jamie
John
Jake & Barbara Ann Hettinga (Swart)
Mellissa Jo, Jessica Ann
Margaret Swart

Predeceased by his son Gary (1992).

He's absent from the body, but present with the Lord, beholding his Redeemer, the Christ, whom he adored.

Kollumerpomp, Fr. Grimsby, Ont.
May 17, 1909 - May 31, 1996

Lord's Day 1: What is our only comfort in life and death?

On May 31, 1996, the Lord took into His eternal home our dear mother, grandmother and great-grandmother

GERTRUDE TIMMER
(nee HAAK)

in her 88th year.

Dear wife of Jan Timmer.

Loving mother of:
Andrew Haak — London, Ont.
Jacob Haak — Lefroy, Ont.
Kees & Anna Haak — London, Ont.
Bob & Hilda Haak — Holland Landing, Ont.
Margaret & Fred Hielema — Jarvis, Ont.
Pat & Ralph Scholten — Bradford, Ont.
John Haak — Toronto, Ont.
Andy & Sonia Haak — Bradford, Ont.
Gertie & Jack Oosterhuis — Keswick, Ont.
Diane & Peter Urbanski — Keswick, Ont.

Dear oma of 50 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren. Also survived by one sister, Maaike, of the Netherlands.

Funeral services took place on June 3, 1996, at the Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church, in St. Catharines, Ont., Rev. H. Katerberg officiating.

Job Opportunities

Youth worker needed, Hebron Chr. Ref. Church, east of Metro Toronto, is looking for a part-time Youth Worker. Our goal is to develop the 'Nurture Model.' For a job description call **(905) 668-5141** or write **Hebron CRC, 407 Crawforth St., Whitby, ON L1N 3R6.**

Job Opportunities

Are you interested in a staff ministry?

We are looking for a minister of preaching and teaching who will also act as a ministry co-ordinator. We are a large, established congregation in Trenton, Ont. A church profile and job description are available upon request. Please direct inquiries or resume to **Search Committee, Ebenezer Chr. Ref. Church, 18 Fourth Avenue, Trenton, ON K8V 5N3, Attention: Mrs. Judy Van Huizen** or **call (613) 392-8488.**

Attention! Attention! Attention!
When you fax your display or classified ads to us (particularly obituaries), please type them and check spelling **BEFORE** you transmit the text.
Thank you.

For Sale

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Allen Computer Organ No. 123C, two manual, 36 stops, 3 couplers, with 65 computer cards and full AGO pedal board. Asking price **$12,000.** Contact **George Lowrie** at **(905) 836-9178.**

Miscellaneous

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Circulation Manager
Christian Courier.

Classifieds

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For rent: Are you interested in a **vacation in Newfoundland** this summer? Our fully furnished house on the outskirts of St. John's is available for rent in July and August to couples who would like to take advantage of this opportunity. Rental for **one week is $300.** For **two weeks or more** it is **$250 per week.** Contact us as soon as possible by phone, but not after June 28, at **(709) 368-7588** or write to

C. Van Dijk, 333 Bay Bulls Rd., St. John's, NF A1G 1B9

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Personal

ONE TO ANOTHER
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Miscellaneous

I would like to buy a ship which is built in a big bottle/jar.
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Events

Hollandse Dag
July 10, 1996
at 9:30 a.m.
in
Caradoc Community Centre
Mt. Brydges, Ont.

For Rent

For Rent: Small 2-bedr. house plus garage. No basement. Ideal for single person or young couple. $425.00 plus utilities. **Jordan, Ont., area.**
Call (905) 562-7174

Personal

APRIL/MEI 1996

THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS ARE REQUESTED TO CONTACT THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS:

ABELS-MEIJER, Mrs. Susanna Johanna Clasina, born June 7, 1923, emigrated to Canada March 11, 1958.

ABUKAR KASSIM-HUSSEIN, Mrs. Rahma, born July 7, 1951 in Mogadishu.

AKKERMAN, Barbara, born December 15, 1974 in Purmerend.

BERLO-LAFLEUR, Mrs. Josephina G.M., born December 15, 1938, emigrated to Canada January 30, 1996.

BOS, Wieger S.T., born August 24, 1931, last known address in the Netherlands: Kuikenweg 175, Beverwijk, emigrated to Canada July 18, 1957.

BREIJAEN, Wilhelmina Gerardina, born May 14, 1933 in Amsterdam, emigrated to Canada March 1954, last known address: Niagara Falls.

BUIZER, Dingeman Wouter, born September 28, 1931.

JONGERDEN-van DIJKHUIZEN, Mrs. A.A., born October 12, 1931, emigrated from Amersfoort to Canada October 5, 1981, last known address: 3731 Main Street, Jordan Ontario.

HEUTINK, Jannij, born September 18, 1930 in Oosterwolde.

HUISMAN, Jacobus J. R., born June 30, 1931, emigrated to Canada August 21, 1967.

KRIJNEN, Pamela Maria Wilhelmina, born May 26, 1964 in Bussum.

LANGEDIJK, Martijn Wim, born April 1, 1971 in Nijmegen, last known address in Canada: 1604-1450 West Georgiastreet, Vancouver.

LEENHOUTS, Annemarie, born November 17, 1959, emigrated to Canada June 17, 1985, last known address: 93 Guilbault Ouest, Montreal, Quebec.

van LOON-MIJERING, Mrs. Hendrika Johanna, born September 20, 1931 in Middelburg

LOOS-OOMEN, Mrs. Maria Catharina Elisabeth, born September 2, 1958, last known address in the Netherlands: Oosterhout, emigrated to Canada June 15, 1995.

LUONG, Thuy-Khanh, born February 3, 1968 in Saigon.

MAHN, children of Johannes Hermanus, born September 30, 1919 in Amsterdam and deceased in 1969.

van der MAREL, Antonie Gerardus Pieter, born December 18, 1949 in De Lier, emigrated to Canada in 1979.

Personal

MEULEMANS, Thomas Leonard, born November 1, 1923, emigrated to Canada April 28, 1958.

NELEN, Catharina Petronella, born December 1, 1941 in Bergen op Zoom.

NGUYEN PHUC, Ton Nu Phoung Thao, born September 25, 1969 in Vietnam.

OLIVIER, Nans, emigrated to Canada from Rotterdam in 1952.

PANTOPHLET, Amalia Celine Rubie, born October 7, 1961.

PECHLER, Rudi, born December 24, 1972.

SIGMOND, Andre, born January 17, 1958.

STOVIUS, Nicolaas G., born June 12, 1969, emigrated to Canada October 27, 1995.

WEERHEIJM, Joost, born July 2, 1931, last known address in the Netherlands: P. Bothstraat 9, Den Haag, emigrated to Canada October 17, 1956.

WIERSMA-van ROEDEN, Mrs. R.P., born April 6, 1962, last known address in the Netherlands: Heide 1, St. Nicolaasga.

de VRIES-BEAR, Mrs. Nynke Wilhelmina, born September 16, 1956 in Achtkarspelen, emigrated to Canada January 15, 1982, last known address: 5418-39th Street, Red Deer, Alberta.

WILLIAMS, David, born December 4, 1971 in Calgary.

van WILLIGENBURG, Berlinda Cecilia Cornelia, born April 14, 1967 in Amstelveen.

CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS
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Kingston: CFRC-FM 101.9 FM
Zondag 12:00 middag

Miscellaneous

What if you couldn't one day next week Walk?

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Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada

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Classifieds

Miscellaneous	Real Estate	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous

The Tulip is the floral symbol of Parkinsons

(NC)—In 1981, Mr. J. W. S. Van der Wereld, the renowned Dutch horticulturist, himself a Parkinsonian, registered his prize cultivar, the "Dr. James Parkinson" bulb to honour both the International Year of the Disabled and Dr. James Parkinson, a British physician who first described the symptoms of this disabling condition in 1817. This red and white tulip was introduced in Canada in 1984 to promote Parkinsons Awareness Month. The bulb is available for sale in September to raise funds for research from all the support groups of The Parkinson Foundation of Canada. To locate The Parkinson group in your community call 1-800-565-3000.

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Osoyoos-CJOR	8:00 am	1490
Penticton-CKOR	8:00 am	800
Port Alberni-CJAV	7:00 pm	1240
Prince George-CIRX	7:00am	94.3
Princeton- CHOR	8:00 am	1400
Smithers-CFBV	9:15am	1230
Summerland-CHOR	8:00 am	1450
Vancouver-CJVB	7:00 am	1470
Vancouver-(fm)	7:00 am	103.3
Vernon-CJIB	9:30pm	940

ALBERTA

Brooks-CIBJ	8:00am	1340
Edson-CJYR	10:00am	970
Ft. McMurray-CJOK	8:30 am	1230
High River-CHRB	6:30 pm	1280
St. Albert-CHMG	8:00 am	104.9

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan-CJSL	8:00am	1280
Weyburn-CFSL	8:00am	1190

MANITOBA

Altona-CFAM	9:30am	950
Steinbach-CHSM	9:30am	1250
Winnipeg-CKJS	9:15am	810

ONTARIO

Atikokan-CFAK	9:30am	1240
Chatham-CFCO	6:00 am	630
Fort Frances -CFOB	9:30 am	640
Guelph-CJOY	8:30am	1460
Hamilton-CHAM	7:30am	820
Kapuskasing-CKAP	9:00am	580
Kingston-WLKC	7:30 a.m	100.7
Newmarket-CKDX	9:00 am	88.5
Oshawa-CKAR	8:00am	1350
Owen Sound-CFOS	10:30am	560
Pembroke-CHVR	10:00am	1350
St.Catharines-CKTB	7:30pm	610
Samia-CHOK	7:30am	1070
Stratford-CJCS	8:45am	1240
Windsor--CKLW	8:30am	580
Wingham-CKNX	10:30am	920
Woodstock-CKDK (fm)	8:00am	102.3

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John-CHSJ	9:30am	700

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Charlottetown-CFCY	7:00am	630

QUEBEC

Montreal-CFQR (fm)	7:30am	92.5

NOVA SCOTIA

Digby-CKDY	6:00am	1420
Kentville-CKEN	8:30am	1490
Middleton-CKAD	8:30am	1350
New Glasgow-CKEC	7:30am	1320
Sydney-CJCB	8:00am	1270
Weymouth-CKDY	8:30am	103.1
Windsor-CFAB	8:30am	1450

FRENCH RADIO:
Perspectives Réformées

ONTARIO

Cornwall-CFIX	9:30am	1170
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QUEBEC

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Classifieds

Events	Vacation	Miscellaneous

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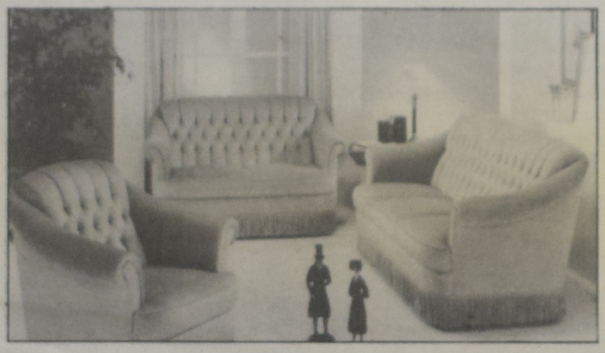

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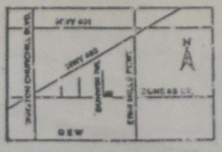

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ATTENTION:
No issue was published **on June 21, 1996!!**

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Qualified persons committed to a Reformed, biblical perspective and educational philosophy are encouraged to send a letter of interest and curriculum vitae to Dr. Rockne McCarthy; mailing address:

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Dordt College is an equal opportunity institution and encourages the nominations and candidacies of women and minorities.

Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

July 1 "Frisian Picnic," 11 a.m., Pinehurst Conservation Park (on Hwy. 24A, 4 miles north of Paris), **Paris**, Ont. (#)

July 8-26 "Summer School," sponsored by Wycliffe College and ICS. Theme: "...bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God" (Col.1:10) At ICS, **Toronto**, Ont. Info.: Chris Barrigar (416) 979-2870 or fax (416) 979-0471 (#).

July 10 "Hollandse Dag," 9:30 a.m., Caradoc Community Centre, **Mount Brydges,** Ont. (#)

July 14 Dutch worship service led by Rev. J. Kuntz, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

July 17 An evening of entertainment with former wrestler, Jake ("The Snake") Roberts. "His thrilling testimony is something you don't want to miss." At 7 p.m., Kennedy Road Tabernacle, 141 Kennedy Rd., **Brampton**, Ont. Info.: Bill Morgan at (905) 677-1846. Freewill offering.

Aug. 25 Dutch worship service led by Rev. Henry R. De Bolster, 3 p.m., CRC, **Ancaster**, Ont.

News

End of war does not bring peace to Central America

Paul VanderVennen

"Everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, every one deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:13-14).

The civil wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala have ended, or are in the process of ending, through peace accords, demobilization and negotiations. A fact-finding delegation organized by the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRLA) has returned from these three Central American countries having examined the effects of the post-war period on the people of this region.

The dispossessed in Central America have seen that revolution and taking control of state structures is not a solution to the injustice they suffer. At the same time, however, the root causes of the war have not been resolved. The majority of the population are suffering systematic violations of their human rights through the implementation of economic policies that exclude them.

Majority excluded

Economic policies initiated by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund are being enthusiastically implemented by the local elites who seek short-term profit. These policies include privatization, reducing the role of government in areas such as education and health care, deregulation, opening up the economies to unlimited foreign investment, and shifting production to an export economy. Privatization was described as a "pinata process," by Lorena Pena, a Salvadoran legislator, as the elites circle around the pinata waiting to pounce on the goodies.

The delegation heard over and over again how the application of these economic policies is resulting in worsening poverty, massive unemployment, violations of labor rights, social disintegration and rising levels of violent crime. At the same time there has been a transmutation of agricultural production from one aimed at meeting local needs to export agri-business, an alarming degradation of soils through the intensive use of agricultural chemicals, as well as the exclusion of huge numbers of people from access to health care and education. There are still routine violations of basic human rights as well.

The majority of the population are simply left out of the formal economic sector. In Nicaragua, the unemployment level is 60 per cent as individuals struggle to simply survive. People no longer speak of the poverty line but of the misery level.

PAUL VANDERVENNEN PHOTOS (2)

Cardboard house in Nicaraguan shantytown gets flooded during rainy season

Search for true peace

"How can we believe we are living in peace when hunger is like a war in our stomachs?" One woman asked the delegation. Another woman in Nicaragua said, "We are not living in peace. Peace is not just the absence of war. It requires the presence of justice. That does not exist when economic rights are violated. Peace must be built, responding to the real needs of people."

Pesticides banned in North America are applied to crops grown for export in Guatemala on land that used to grow corn and beans for the local market

At the same time the delegation saw the strength and resilience of the people as communities are organizing for their survival. The delegation witnessed rural health care programs and a pre-school education program in areas where there are no services provided by governments. Communities were organizing around environmental, agricultural and indigenous issues, as well as attempting to protect workers from violations of their labor rights in the free trade zones. These efforts by civil society provide a basis for hope for the future. They need to be supported in order to be effective in the face of an economic model that seeks to exclude and silence the majority.

Paul VanderVennen represents the Council of Christian Reformed Churches on the board of ICCHRLA, and recently returned from Central America as part of the ICCHRLA delegation. He lives in Toronto.

Grassroots labor unions and political party offer hope in Brazil

Robert VanderVennen

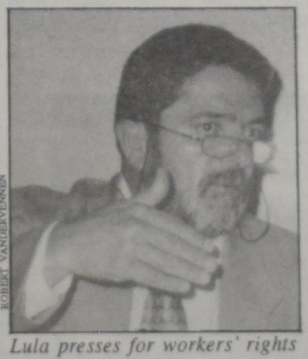
TORONTO — Not all human rights news in Latin America is bad; not quite all. The Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America (ICCHRLA) recently sponsored an interview in Toronto with Brazilian political leader Luis Ignacio Lula de Silva, who showed how his labor party gives hope for the poor who are suffering under globalization.

Globalization is the way the International Monetary Fund and World Bank require heavily indebted countries like Brazil to restructure their economy in order to stabilize their debt. But as markets are thrown open to international trade, cheap foreign products come in against which local manufacturers cannot compete, so the country is de-industrialized and people are thrown out of work.

President Fernando Collor de Mello has acted to globalize Brazil. He's proud that inflation has dropped from double digits to single digits. But Lula points out that at the same time unemployment has skyrocketed to double digits, with more than one million unemployed in the Sao Paolo area alone, and misery in Brazil has multiplied.

A principled program

Lula helped found the Workers Party (PT) 16 years ago. In 1986 he was elected to the federal Congress with more votes than any other candidate had ever received. In 1994 he ran for president and received 47 per cent of the votes cast. The party has this kind of strong acceptance because it is not merely pragmatic but has a principled program, he insists.



ROBERT VANDERVENNEN

Lula presses for workers' rights in Brazil

At age 11 Lula left school to work in the factories. In 1975 he became president of the metal-workers union, and later with other union workers he helped found the Unified Workers Central, which now represents 18 million workers. The PT, the only leftwing political party in Brazil, represents the case of workers and the poor against the wealthy and often corrupt national leaders.

Lula came to Canada with M. Garcia, secretary for international relations of the PT, to consult with union leaders and non-governmental organizations about common problems.

These leaders are especially concerned about the effects of globalization, since they say that with programs like NAFTA the poor countries always suffer at the expense of the richer. They want help in designing a development policy uniquely for Brazil, rather than simply follow the policy of nations that are much different.

Land reform needed

A great need in Brazil is land reform, and with it, an agricultural policy that will help farmers. Another problem is that foreign money aimed for social problems gets hijacked along the way, say the labor leaders.

International trade and mutual help are much needed, says Lula, and working people must provide input. He is hopeful that his growing political party will turn globalization in a direction that will help the poor as well as the rich.